

How to get even better results from your athletes

This is what most coaching manuals don't teach you

For coaches of all sports

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I bet you're thinking 'not another book about fear of speaking in public written by someone who's never had a problem'. Well

I do have a problem. I understand totally what it feels like to know that you should say something, in fact you want to say something but you can't.

When I was ten I started the new academic year in a new class with a new teacher. As it was a junior school this teacher taught us everything from English to Mathematics, Geography to History. At the end of the academic year there was the usual parent/teacher evening. My parents went along to find out how

I had been doing during the year and my teacher told them that

I seemed happy, my work was good, but that apart from answering the register twice a day I hadn't spoken to him and he hadn't spoken to me. My mother was furious but he said I was so quiet he didn't want to upset me by making me talk. I was sent off to elocution lessons where I learnt how to speak clearly and confidently when I had to. At my next school I often volunteered to read in assembly (an old mathematics teacher said I was the only person he could hear and let me off mathematics tests!) but I still never volunteered information in class. I'm still a shy person but I've learnt how to speak when I need to. At least now I know that if I want to explain a topic to people I can – instead of sitting listening to other people who actually know less than me.

In this book I've included all the things I was taught plus tips that I've discovered over the years.

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PREFACE

WHY I'VE WRITTEN THIS BOOK

As a mother of two daughters who have in their time attended swimming, dancing, gymnastics, yoga, violin, singing, drumming and tennis lessons - sometimes in groups, sometimes individually, I feel as though I have witnessed some of the best and worst aspects of communication between coach and student.

As a voice coach it became apparent to me that 'good' coaches (described as such, not only by me but by other parents), were the coaches who were able to communicate their love of their activity and their skill, be it dancing or tennis, to the student. They managed to get the best out of every student. These coaches were not always the best qualified but they had the ability to explain and to listen.

Having said that, some successful students were occasionally taught by some of the not so good coaches. In these cases it was the students who knew how to get the best from their training sessions. They knew what to ask the coach and when to ask it and they knew how to listen to the coach. So, although this book is primarily aimed at coaches of all sports, both amateur and professional, athletes will also gain a lot from it. We must be careful not to put all the blame on the coaches, if children refuse to speak clearly to their coach, it makes life twice as difficult for the coach. How can a coach be certain that a child has understood if the child doesn't know how to communicate. Parents will also benefit from reading this book, as it highlights problems that coaches can encounter when talking to parents and children. If an athlete is to be successful there must be positive communication between the parents and the coach.

Whilst most coaching courses have a communication element, it is not usually taught by anyone with qualifications in this field. Trainee coaches and coaches striving to improve their

teaching skills are often told to 'give a presentation', they are told the title and sent away to prepare it. They are then assessed on the delivery but no-one has taken the time to show them how to do it. They haven't been taught how to speak when they are too terrified to open their mouth, how to breathe so that they can get to the end of a sentence or how to make sure that everyone in the room can hear them. It is rather like telling someone to 'serve an ace' but not showing them how to serve in the first place.

It doesn't matter how much you know about your sport, before anyone can carry out your instructions, answer your questions or laugh at your jokes, they must be able to hear and understand what you say. Our voice gives away how we feel. People can tell from how we sound whether we are confident, fed up, grumpy, happy or excited. Good coaches are able to control how they sound. You might feel grumpy and fed up but you will need to sound excited if you are to motivate your players.

In this book I have tried to show coaches and athletes how to speak clearly, when to speak for maximum effect and how to listen effectively.

It explains how we should stand, how we should breathe and how we should dress in order to speak well. It has basic exercises which we should all carry out daily - how many of us bother to exercise the muscles in our face as often as we exercise other muscles in our body? You may argue that you use your voice all day so it doesn't need exercise, but don't we use our arms and legs all day as well?

It was tempting to put all the technical details together at the beginning of the book, but I believe this would have discouraged some people from reading past the first few pages. I have tried, therefore, to mix the technical with the practical and at the end I have included some frequently asked questions. The answers to these questions put the information contained in the book into more practical situations.

The benefits of clear speech to coaches are numerous. Drop out rates decrease, confidence soars, no need to shout - less sore throats, less stressful sessions, never having to repeat yourself, being able to put forward your ideas to schools and businesses easily.

If you are on a football pitch, tennis court or similar and want to explain tactics you will not have access to a flip chart or an overhead projector or even a blackboard - you will have to use your voice.

Athletes benefit by getting that extra 'something' from their sessions that could make the difference between winning and losing. It gives the athlete the confidence to ask the coach that extra question - the answer to which could make a champion!

I hope this is a book that can be easily dipped into. Although technical in places it is basically simple to understand and I hope readers will say, 'of course, that's obvious, why didn't I think of that before?'

If every person who reads this book adopts just one idea to improve their communication skills, coaching standards and results will undoubtedly improve.

Chapter 1

BE A STAR!

All winners have one thing in common and that's confidence.

They've confidence in their ability to compete, confidence in their ability to win and confidence in their ability to communicate.

Successful players can talk easily to other players (this is particularly important in team sports such as football, rugby, cricket, basketball etc.), to their coaches, to their sponsors, to managers, to referees and umpires. They don't play a match worrying about after match interviews, this means that they can concentrate fully on the job in hand - winning!

Successful coaches can talk confidently and enthusiastically to

- a) other coaches
- b) to players
- c) to parents
- d) to managers
- e) to school groups
- f) local businesses

We need to remember that the way we talk greatly influences the way other people think of us and consequently how they react to us. If we're worried about our ability to communicate, those listening to us will sense our unease and assume that we are unsure, not only about talking to others but also about our ability to coach or compete, we will come across as introvert. When you are out and about meeting people and talking to people you need to remember that you are representing not just yourself, but your sport, your club, your coach (or player if you are the coach), your school and possibly your sponsors. If you come across

as unintelligible it will reflect on many other people. If, as a coach, you can communicate easily with parents and children and appear confident about what you do, your waiting lists will certainly increase.

Word will spread that you are enthusiastic and easy to talk to. This doesn't mean that all successful people are extroverts who love the sound of their own voice. My father used to say that people who talk non stop will run out of intelligent things to say and are bound to talk nonsense eventually! Even the quietest of people can have the inner confidence of knowing that when the situation arises for them to speak, they have the technical expertise to know they can do it and can do it well.

ENTERTAINERS

As well as being sportsmen, players and coaches are entertainers and just like any other entertainer they must perform - even on bad days.

Sporting events always take place in front of spectators, it may only be a few parents, it could be thousands cheering you on, so I will assume that you must enjoy the thrill of performing in front of people – just like actors, singers, circus performers etc. It is often said that the most successful sports people are 'big match' players - they play their best in front of larger crowds – Jimmy Connors, John McEnroe, Manchester United players etc. If you ask top athletes such as footballers or tennis players what they would like to be doing if they weren't successful in their chosen sport - a large number of them dream of being pop stars or film stars! Vinnie Jones (ex footballer) is an example of this and count how many ex-sports stars become television presenters where they are still in the spotlight.

As a sports person you experience the fear, the uncertainty of not knowing what will happen next, the thrill and the adrenalin that actors experience before they go on stage. If you didn't like being the centre of attention you'd have become an accountant! You might wake up with

a headache, and feel dreadful, but you still have to perform. You have to smile, chat, instruct, be tactful and most of all let your enthusiasm for your sport shine through your speech - everyday!

SPOKEN ENGLISH

We all know the importance of learning to read, learning to add up and even of learning to cook. Parents spend many hours making sure that their children master these skills but it is always supposed that children can speak. Parents spend plenty of time with their children increasing the child's vocabulary assuming that they can produce the sound to make the words adequately well just by listening to those around them. To be able to speak well, one has to be taught. Good speakers are not born - it is a skill which anyone can learn.

If sports coaches speak badly, we tend to put up with it. They may mumble, whisper or even shout at us but as long as they appear knowledgeable about their sport they are usually considered good enough to teach. Very few, if any, people fail coaching courses because their spoken English is bad and besides, how many trainers on these courses know how to recognize or correct bad speech? I am not talking about bad grammar but about poor communication.

When talking about good speaking I am not referring to the over dramatic use of words often found in amateur dramatic groups nor the artificial 'posh' effect of public speakers. I am talking about effective communication skills, the ability to share your ideas and experiences with others. People often think that a voice coach will try to make every one sound the same, as a native of Dorset in the south of England

I believe that individual accents are a positive element - there is already too much uniformity in the world, all the same shops in the shopping centres, same food fast food restaurants etc. Everyone should sound different. Your voice is part of your personality and you should

sound different to the next person. The main aim of a good voice coach is that the speech should be clear and easily understood regardless of accent.

TECHNIQUE

Once you have taken the time and worked hard to train as a coach and you've got a few hours of experience behind you, you will want people (pupils, parents, managers, businessmen etc) to be able to understand and remember what you say. You will want to make an impact and a positive one at that! A lot more information is retained by listeners if that information is delivered by a trained voice. These listeners don't need to guess what you have said, or force themselves to concentrate because your voice sounds monotonous, they can easily pick out the important words. The images of what you are saying jump out at them so it pays to take some time mastering the basic techniques of clear speech.

As with tennis, swimming, ballroom dancing or any other physical activity basic technical skills must be mastered before you can let your artistic and imaginative side run away. Bad habits picked up at the beginning can take years to get rid of, so take the time to conquer these basic skills.

You wouldn't expect to be able to serve an ace in tennis, swim 100 metres or dance the perfect foxtrot if you had only read about the technique needed in a book. Imagine trying to learn tennis without a tennis racket, learning to swim without getting wet or trying to achieve the perfect foxtrot with no music - it can't be done. You will have had to physically practice the skills required and not just once, but over and over again. Speaking requires the same practice - it is no good just reading about it, you must practice out loud, over and over again. It would seem incredible to us to try and speak a foreign language without speaking aloud and yet we expect to be able to speak perfect English without the same practice. The exercises that follow in this book must always be spoken out loud. You need to get used to

the sound of your voice and not be frightened by it. I wouldn't recommend that you record your voice to listen to it as you will only hear what other people hear - you need to get used to hearing your voice as you hear it.

In the following chapters, I have included some quite technical details.

I am sure that as today's coaches have to be experts in psychology, biomechanics, nutrition and much more they are more than capable of understanding the theory behind good speech. However, excellent results can be obtained if you decide to omit some of these details.

When it comes to confidence, correct posture is also very important. If our posture is correct it gives us an air of confidence. If you stand and sit correctly you will look and feel more confident. Be proud of who you are and what you do. People are less likely to question you if you look and sound confident and if you look and sound confident you stand a much better chance of feeling confident.

Body language is as important as spoken language and the way you sit and stand communicates a lot about you to the other person. A person who stands up straight is saying, 'I'm proud of who I am and what I do'

whereas a person who slumps and tries to hide is saying, 'I'm not sure if you'll like who I am and I'm not sure if I'm very good at what I do so perhaps I'd better hide away'.

Which coach would you choose?

KEY POINTS

1. All winners have an abundance of confidence
2. People who participate in any sport love to entertain
3. Speech needs to be practiced out loud
4. Basic techniques must be mastered
5. Look confident, sound confident, feel confident

CHAPTER 2

WHAT ON EARTH DO YOU MEAN?

I'll start this chapter with a question. What do you, as a coach, do when you are working? You'll probably answer 'teach tennis', 'show children how to play football', 'spend my day in the swimming pool' or whatever activity you teach. Obviously this is true, but if you stop and think about it, the majority of your time is spent, not playing your sport, but communicating with people. You don't work in an office where you see only a few work colleagues every week. You are continually meeting different people of all ages and of all abilities. You have to speak to parents, children, school teachers, head teachers, managers, receptionists, businesses and adult learners to name a few and amongst this list are the young, old, agile, not so agile, polite people, funny people, argumentative people and easy going people. Today we spend a lot of our time communicating by faxing, by emailing or by texting but speaking is still the only way to communicate on a tennis court, football pitch, swimming pool or sports hall. I wouldn't dream of telling you what to say but I will show you how to say it more effectively.

Every time you go to work you are performing - you have to keep the interest of your athletes just as an actor has to keep the interest of his audience. The actor has to share his ideas with the audience and you have to share your experiences with the athletes. Like an actor you mustn't let the audience become bored. Some voices are so monotonous that listeners shut off - no matter how hard they try to listen. Your voice needs to be full of variety, and the next few chapters will explain how you can achieve this.

WORD PICTURES

Words create images in our minds, if I were to say "Wimbledon Champion",

“Ryder Cup” or “Olympic Games” to a group of people, they would all get pictures in their minds. All of these pictures would all be different and as communicators we need to be able to share these pictures with the people listening to us. To be able to share these ideas, you need to pick out the most important words and make these important words stand out. Therefore, the first rule of good speech is to be able to pick out the words which are important. If you are explaining how a particular shot should be hit (slower, higher, harder etc) you should instinctively know which words are important. Let’s imagine you are talking about

Wimbledon some of the important words are likely to be grass, tennis and rain! (See fig 1, page 79).

Try to pick out what you feel are the important words in the following sentences:

1. The trouble with your serve is that you let your racket drop too low and you don’t stretch up to hit the ball.
2. In order to go faster, try breathing after every third stroke.
3. I think we should have won the World Cup, their number three deliberately tripped our best player up. We should have been awarded a penalty.

I have underlined the words I think are important below:

1. The trouble with your serve is that you let your racket drop too low and you don’t stretch up to hit the ball.
2. In order to go faster, try breathing after ever third stroke.
3. I think we should have won the World Cup, their number three deliberately tripped our best player up. We should have been awarded a penalty.

If you find this difficult, imagine you can only hear part of the sentence. Which words would you need to hear to be able to guess what the sentence meant? Try trouble, serve, racket, too low and stretch.

Once you know which words are important you need to be able to emphasize these words. They need to stand out and there are various techniques for doing this.

INFLECTION

The first technique is the use of inflection. This put simply is the bending of the voice. The voice may start a word on a lower note than it finishes the word. If you speak without using inflection the voice becomes monotonous and people listening will fall asleep! It would have the same effect as singing a song all on the same note - it would sound terrible. We need to slide the voice up and down during a sentence. When asking a question we bend the voice in an upwards direction at the end of the sentence. When we have finished a thought we end on a downhill inflection. A good example of this is when we are quoting lists of things. Our voice bends up at the end of each item and then down on the final one.

Cricket, football, rugby, athletics and tennis.

If you want to sound passionate about your subject you will need to use inflection. A voice that has no melody sounds as though it has no energy.

The next four techniques are the four 'P's'. Pausing, Power, Pitch and Pace.

PAUSING

Silence, when used correctly, can be much more effective than actually speaking. To be an effective speaker you need to pause before an important word. This gives the audience a chance to anticipate what you are about to say, which can create a kind of excitement and has

a dramatic effect. It can also be equally effective to pause after the important word. This gives the audience time to reflect on what you have just said. Try this sentence:

The Snooker World Champion, is also, the Bowls World Champion.

A pause after ‘Snooker World Champion’ gives people a chance to get an image of the snooker champion in their minds and a pause after ‘also’ lets them anticipate what is coming next - they should be imagining all sorts of things - is he also the tallest, smallest, fastest or what?

Of course, to be really dramatic and to make the word or words really stand out, you can pause before and after the important word.

The use of the pause shows other people that you have confidence in yourself, you are not afraid of silence. We all tend to associate people who talk very fast with nervousness. When a small child is frightened or nervous they talk too fast and parents all around the world can be heard saying ‘slow down, take a breath and start again, but speak slowly this time’. People who are nervous have a tendency to talk non stop!

Obviously, during this pause you can take a breath and plan what you are going to say next.

POWER

Power is simply the volume you use. The more people you are talking to, the louder you need to be. However, if you follow the advice in this book you will hardly ever have to shout! If you speak clearly, you will be heard more easily even if you speak quietly. Variety is the key here, if you want to sound exciting, the voice needs to be louder. If you speak too quietly you will also give the impression that you are too frightened to be loud and that you don’t want to be noticed – hardly leadership quality! Confident people usually speak quite loudly because they are not afraid of the sound of their own voice.

Remember that your voice must always be loud enough to be heard. It is very difficult to get excited about what is being said if you have to strain your ears to hear it.

Think of one or two people you know who you think are confident – then think about the volume of their voice. Is it quiet or loud?

PITCH

Most nervous people speak with a high pitch (as do angry people) – by lowering the pitch of your voice you will sound more confident but you also want to sound excited and enthusiastic about a topic (and as coaches and players you should sound enthusiastic when talking about your sport). To do this you need to raise the pitch of your voice – but don't screech! Talking with a low pitch can make you sound more professional but it can also become very monotonous and boring. If you have a naturally high pitched voice try to lower it just a little. It is a fact that high pitched voices are less easy to listen to than lower pitched voices, so to make your voice sound exciting you should only raise the pitch on the important (or exciting) words.

Read the following sentence to yourself.

'It was a fantastic goal'

Now say it out loud twice - the first time say the word 'fantastic' lower than the other words in the sentence the second time say the word 'fantastic' higher than the other words. Which sounded the most enthusiastic? If done properly it should have been the second one.

PACE

Pace is the speed at which you speak. The more serious the topic, the slower you should speak. You will also find that the larger the room or hall you are in, the slower your speech

will need to be. The same is true if you are talking to an elderly or slightly hard of hearing audience. If you are talking to an audience who are not experts in your field, for example if you are talking about tennis (lobs, spin, different grips etc.) to an audience who aren't very familiar with these terms, you will need to slow down slightly to give them a chance to take in what you have said. Talking outside needs to be slower than talking inside especially if the weather conditions are bad as the wind and rain will swallow up your words. Although I wouldn't recommend that anybody should speak too quickly, there are times when you will need to be slightly faster than others. This would happen if you wanted to convey excitement, anger or a crisis of any description. You can't expect athletes to get excited about what you are saying if you don't sound excited yourself.

That's the four 'P's' covered. Lastly we are concerned with how we look when we are speaking.

FACIAL EXPRESSION

Facial expression is essential in communication. We need to use our eyes, eyebrows and mouths to reinforce what we mean. If we are saying something serious we need to look serious, if we're joking we need to smile! These expressions shouldn't look rehearsed. Don't think, 'oh this is a serious bit, I must look serious'. If you fully understand and believe in what you are saying your face will show the correct expression at the correct time. Some groups of people need to see our faces more than others - children often need to see our face because they don't always understand the vocabulary we use and the hard of hearing find it helpful, they can try to lip read what we say or just use our general expression to guess what we mean.

Gesture can be used to emphasize a point but mustn't be overdone. A speaker who fidgets and gestures too much is very disconcerting. Gesture is great when you are actually coaching

but if talking to a head teacher or business man it can become very distracting. Imagine hands flying all over the place or a head that nods up and down all the time. It's very difficult in these circumstances to concentrate on what is being said.

All of the above, inflection, pausing, power, pitch, pace, facial expression and gesture are ways of emphasizing specific important words.

You must remember that emphasizing different words can alter the meaning of what you are saying. This can be important when coaches are talking to players or players are talking to coaches.

A breakdown in communication can cause more stress than any run of bad results and may even be the cause of bad results if instructions aren't clearly given or if the meaning was accidentally altered.

The following sentence shows how emphasis can change the meaning. Stress the word in capitals in each sentence.

'Chloe loves to volley a winner'

1. '**CHLOE** loves to volley a winner'. Meaning no one else likes to do this just Chloe
2. 'Chloe **LOVES** to volley a winner'. Meaning it makes her really happy
3. 'Chloe loves to **VOLLEY** a winner'. Meaning Chloe is not too keen on hitting winners with her ground strokes.
4. 'Chloe loves to volley a **WINNER**.' Meaning she only likes to volley if she hits a winner

PICTURES

Get a piece of paper and a pen and draw a quick picture of a Winners Trophy. Now, could you describe it to someone who doesn't know what a Trophy looks like? Is it shiny? Is it big? Does it have a name on it?

You'll probably find it easier if you use your hands. This is because the movement will be copied by your voice. If you want to say that it's large and you use your hands to indicate a LARGE item, your voice will elongate the word to imitate the movement. Imagine the movement of a fisherman's arms when he is explaining how big the last fish he caught was! (See fig 2, page 79).

Now, describe the trophy again, but this time sit on your hands. Try to keep your voice as animated as it was when you moved your hands. The aim is to draw the pictures with your voice.

LISTENING

Good communication is

50% speech training and

50% ear training (or listening).

By listening to other people you will be able to interact with them. If you don't take time to listen to what people are saying you don't stand a chance of being able to respond intelligently to them.

You wouldn't expect to hit a ball or kick a ball if you didn't watch it coming towards you and you can't react to a sentence if you don't listen to it. Also, take the time to listen to yourself, does what you say make sense. Do you need to slow down - sometimes the brain is working faster than the mouth, we might miss out words or get them in the wrong order.

When you are listening to someone make sure that you really listen to what the person is saying, and that you aren't just concentrating on what you want to say as soon as you get the chance.

BREATHING

Every sound we make needs breath. I'm going to ask you to stand up. Now say out loud:

'I am a brilliant coach and I'm bound to produce some champions.'

What did you do immediately before you spoke? I would imagine that most of you pulled your shoulders up as you took a deep breath.

Lifting up your shoulders did you no good whatsoever! All you did was restrict yourself and tense your muscles. This is called clavicle breathing. With this type of breathing you are trying to move parts of the body which don't move, in particular the top ribs.

When we are asleep or resting the air enters our body slowly and escapes quickly. When speaking we need to inhale quickly and quietly. The emphasis here is on must quietly. It must be done naturally with no preparation - you mustn't think 'now I'm going to take a breath'. If you lift your shoulders and think, ready, steady, go - there will be a gasping sound. This gasping sound will make you sound unfit - not too good for a sports coach!

Breathe in through your nose as this will protect your vocal cords.

Breathing through your mouth will dry out your vocal cords so it is essential that anyone with a sore throat breathes through the nose. Good breath control is essential for good speech but it must appear natural.

In order to breathe to speak we need to use our intercostal muscles and our diaphragm. The intercostal muscles move the ribs and the diaphragm forms the bottom of the thorax and the top of the abdomen. At the centre of the diaphragm is the central tendon which joins the lower ribs, the sternum and the spine. During normal breathing the diaphragm descends about 1 cm but during strenuous breathing it can descend as much as 10 cms. Between the ribs are the external intercostals muscles and when these contract they elevate the ribs.

When we breathe in our lungs need to fill up with air. This requires our ribs to move outwards and sideways. If you place your hands on your ribs just above your waist and breathe in you should be able to feel your ribs move outwards. As the lungs fill with air the diaphragm will move downwards, giving plenty of space for the lungs to expand. As the air is used up the diaphragm returns to its normal position - pushing the air out. During normal breathing out (exhalation) the muscles are relaxing.

The diaphragm and the external intercostals muscles relax causing the ribs to depress. Other muscles become active only after forceful breathing, as in sport or trained speaking - the abdominal muscles and the internal intercostals contract. This is a skill which has to be practiced, it does not come naturally.

It is also important that your posture is correct. Stand up and sit down again. How many of you sat down and then let your ribs drop down a second time?

We have 12 pairs of ribs. Ribs 1-7 are fixed and cannot move, consequently lifting up your shoulders or any other movement around the neck and shoulders cannot increase the size of your thorax. Ribs 8-10 can move outwards and these are the ribs we concentrate on. Ribs 11 and 12 are floating ribs and when we sit down badly, we rest the top half of our body on these ribs. Your lungs need room to expand.

I'm going to be a nuisance and ask you to stand up again. This time imagine you are talking to a group of adults. How are your knees? Have you locked them tight? If so, bend them a little and relax the muscles.

The tension in the back of your knees will travel up your back into your neck and shoulders making breathing more difficult. Let your feet take your weight, not your knees. Stand evenly on the heels of your feet.

Make sure you are not standing to attention. The only people who do this successfully are people who don't need to speak such as soldiers on parade, gymnasts and ballerinas. If you

stand upright with your head up (but still relaxed and not too attentive) people will immediately take notice of you. You will look as though you know what you are talking about.

Standing and sitting correctly will also make you feel less tired so you will sound much more alert.

Whilst you are sitting or standing correctly, try the following sentence. Start each line with a new breath and see how far you can get until you run out of breath (ignore punctuation)

1. I can name

2. I can name seventeen different sports

3. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket

4. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming

5. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton.

6. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton, gymnastics, trampolining.

7. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton, gymnastics, trampolining, diving

8. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton, gymnastics, trampolining, diving, skiing, hockey

9. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton, gymnastics, trampolining, diving, skiing, hockey, basketball and

10. I can name seventeen different sports: football, baseball, cricket, tennis, golf, swimming, boxing, squash, badminton, gymnastics, trampolining, diving, skiing, hockey, basketball, snooker and athletics.

Although breath control is very important, we mustn't become so obsessed with taking deep breaths that we are too frightened to pause in the middle of a sentence if it makes sense to do so. Good breath control means that we can pause when we want to rather than when we have to.

Key Points

1. All words create images - we must share these images
2. Emphasize the important words using inflection, pause, power, pitch, pace, and facial expression
3. Listen to people - don't just wait for your turn
4. Use Intercostal breathing
5. Stand relaxed - not to attention

CHAPTER 3

TALKING TO PEOPLE OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW MORE THAN YOU DO!

When speaking to any adults, the speed with which you speak creates an impression of your personality. If you speak too quickly you will sound aggressive, however if your speech is too hesitant you may come across as being unsure and muddled.

PARENTS

If you coach children (and most coaches do) you will have to interact with parents. This is not always as easy as it could be and from my experience of teaching, I put parents into four different groups.

1. Those that know everything and don't hesitate to let you know where you are going wrong in no uncertain terms.
2. Those who don't know anything but think they should - they want to know why, what, where and why not? They are continually questioning what you are doing.
3. Then there are those parents who drop the children off, disappear and, if you are very lucky, reappear to collect the child at the end of the session or as near after the end as they can manage! We have all been left at the end of a session waiting with one child for what seems like an eternity. Obviously you can't abandon the child but if you have other lessons to get to, it does become very frustrating. Don't take it out on the child, they often feel embarrassed by their parents and are as annoyed as you are. Try to make it clear to the parents when they do eventually arrive that you cannot be responsible for the child once the lesson has finished.

4. If you are very, very lucky you will have parents who pay on time, collect on time, speak when they are spoken to, keep quiet the rest of the time and they make sure the child practices. These parents also let you know in advance if the child is going to be late or is unable to attend. As a coach myself I can safely say that these are far and few between.

When you are talking to parents it is vital to put the right parents with the right children! It can be extremely embarrassing to talk to John's parents, thinking they are David's parents. It is much better to say, 'Sorry, I know all the children's names but I'm not sure about the parents yet' than it is to guess and to get it horribly wrong.

If you would rather that the parents don't stay and watch, make it clear to them at the start that it is better for the child if the parent is not present. Be polite and explain your reasons. It's best to explain this during your first conversation with the parents when you are initially arranging for the child to have lessons. It is very difficult to stop the habit once it has started. If you give in to one parent, others will expect to copy. Coaches starting out, are often afraid of upsetting the parents, of losing a pupil and therefore losing income, but most parents understand once it has been explained and those who still cause a fuss are likely to forever cause you problems! So for your long term sanity it might be just as well to get rid of these pupils and parents at the outset. If you have parents who are overbearing, don't ignore the problem and hope it will go away - it rarely does. If they interfere with play, take them to one side and explain that this isn't allowed. Be polite but firm and make sure that you and the parents in question have adequate time to discuss the problem.

You must always remember that however annoying a parent may be to you, in their opinion they are doing what is right for their child.

LISTEN TO THE PARENTS

Listen to what the parents are saying or asking you. However tempting it may be, try not to interrupt them. If it really is impossible for you to speak to them at that moment, explain and make arrangements to speak to them at the beginning of the next session or arrange to phone them at a mutually convenient time. Parents nowadays are very busy, so if they've taken the time to speak to you, they consider what they have to say to be important. Do them the courtesy of thinking it is important too.

Listen actively, acknowledge what they are saying by nodding and smiling, don't just stand there with a blank look on your face. Make sure you listen to what they are saying, don't just stand there waiting for a break in their speech so that you can have your say! Try to gauge their mood, do they look angry or confused, look at the body language and react accordingly. If they are angry, listen to what they have to say, don't be on the defensive and don't assume it is you they are angry with. If you coach a team perhaps there is some tension amongst team members. If you coach in groups (tennis or gymnastics for example) perhaps some of the individuals don't get on with each other. If you only teach individually, remember that the parents know their child better than you do - so listen!

Listen attentively to what they are saying or asking you. You won't be able to placate them if you don't listen. You can't kick a football if you don't watch it coming towards you and you can't give an answer if you don't listen to the question. When you do answer avoid the use of jargon. What to you may seem like obvious everyday explanations, will no doubt confuse most parents. By jargon I mean words that you use all the time when talking to athletes or other coaches but words which parents never use. Words such as slice, topspin, off side and arab spring will confuse most parents. Whilst you will want to appear professional and will want to sound very informed be careful not to give the impression that you consider yourself to be better than they are.

As you get to know the parents and child remember any goals the children may have. Find out why they are participating in the sport, is it for fun, do they want to compete on a local basis, do they want to coach, or perhaps compete professionally? You may want to alter your coaching techniques to suit their goals.

LOOK AT THE PARENTS

Look at the parents when they are speaking to you. They will be speaking to you either before their child's session starts or after it has finished (hopefully not during) so don't be tempted to turn away and pick up equipment while you are listening. It gives a 'don't care' impression and they won't be sure if you are listening or not. I'm sure you think that you're more than capable of listening and doing other things at the same time but are you really concentrating on what they are saying. If you really must set things up or tidy away at the same time as you are talking to the parents try at least to have some eye contact with the parents - but don't stare! Again, nod and smile to show them that you are, indeed, listening to them.

TALKING TO PARENTS

When you talk to parents make sure you pause between thoughts long enough for the parents to interact with you. If you ask them a question give them the chance to answer it and let them finish their answer before you have your say. When answering questions try not to use one word answers, these will give the impression you can't be bothered to speak to them. The answers don't have to be mini speeches but it is possible to be concise and still be polite. It's a fact that short answers are generally more easily understood, if you ramble on too much you will only confuse them. Always be friendly and enthusiastic and praise their child as much as possible.

Imagine you are a football coach and you spot a young boy playing football for a different team than the one you work with. You'd like the boy to play for your team so you arrange to talk to the boys parents. What would you say? You might be the best football coach in the country and you may well have the best team but the parents will want to know what you can do for their son. Are you the role model they require? Will you put the boy's interests first? Will you help him achieve his goals?

Listen to the parents, try to find areas where you agree. They are only interested in your history and in your ability to the extent to which it will help their son. If you want to achieve success you will have to work with the parents all the way. Will you push him and do they want you to push him? Will you let him compete weekly and do they want him to compete weekly? Does he want to be a professional player and can you help him achieve this? Listen to what they say and try to tell them what they want to hear. If they mention in conversation that he is very competitive tell them about the competitions your team enter, if they say he loves talking to people suggest he does some publicity work for the team.

Having asked numerous parents why they have changed coaches, it seems that for beginners the main reason is that the parents didn't get on with the coach. He either didn't explain things thoroughly or he was very hesitant in encouraging the child to enter for local tournaments or competitions. It would appear that parents want to be kept informed they are spending good money and want to make sure they are getting something in return. More advanced athletes changed coach because they felt the instruction wasn't advanced enough. This is often a choice made by the coach to concentrate on younger or less advanced athletes and to then let them move on to another coach for more advanced work. If you do become friendly with some of the parents be very careful not to use the lesson time to socialise with these parents. I know of a dance teacher who used to teach thirty minute lessons, however she would often spend the first ten minutes chatting to parents about things not connected with

dancing. This irritated not only other parents who had paid for a thirty minute lesson but it also annoyed the children who were there to dance!

No matter how good a coach you are, ultimately the parents have the upper hand - they pay you. If they decide they don't like you and can't communicate with you - they will go elsewhere.

REFEREES AND UMPIRES

When you're attending a sports event, whether it is a huge international one or a small local event, be very aware of how you address the officials. I don't just mean the match referee or umpire but the linesmen, starters, ball boys, receptionists, programme sellers etc.

Your athletes and their parents will take their lead from you. If you are rude and disrespectful to those in authority, your athletes will tend to be the same. Don't try to pull rank over the receptionist who may be rushed off her feet, her job is as important as yours so be friendly, courteous and understanding. It's not her fault if matches are running late or if other competitors have failed to turn up.

You may not always agree with every decision made but always be polite. Talk clearly and calmly, there is nothing to be gained from excitable ranting. If you do ask the referee or umpire why a certain decision was made, listen to the reply. Don't ask and then continue to rant, not letting the other individual get a word in. Remember that the referee is only doing his job and in a lot of instances is doing it for free.

Volunteer referees often work a five day week in an office and then spend their spare time making sure your athletes can pursue their interests. Without these volunteers a lot of events would be unable to take place, and your business may not be as successful as it is now.

Teach your athletes to accept bad decisions with grace and to use any aggression they may have to their advantage in their performance. If you continually criticize individual referees or umpires, you may find that parents and athletes will get the impression that you are a moaner. They will also begin to wonder what you say about them (athletes and parents) when they are not around! You want to appear professional so shrug off any disagreement you may have. The best way to have the last word is for your athlete to win!

MANAGERS

As well as talking to children and parents you will no doubt at some time in your career have to liaise with management of some kind. If you are employed by a leisure centre you will have to please your employers. Gone are the days when managers of sports centres were once sports coaches themselves who had decided on a less physically active career!

These managers knew only too well the problems that you, as a coach are facing. Today, most managers are graduates with degrees in sport management or they have leisure industry qualifications and they may have no real understanding of your day to day problems. Put any ideas or problems you have to them in simple clear language.

Put the important issues first and try not to moan too much. Managers also have a job to do and if every time they see you, you are complaining they will start to avoid you. Be positive and think before you speak. Be aware of how other people picture you - are you always complaining or are you always happy with time to talk to everyone. If people think that you are always miserable they will be very reluctant to share new ideas with you or ask for your help. If you are always cheerful with time for a quick word you will hear all the latest gossip and will be aware of any new ideas management are considering at any time!

A lot of coaches like the idea of coaching in schools. Be warned – this can be very hard work. Schools are generally only interested in activities that will benefit the schools image. Will

your activity impress school inspectors or will it encourage parents to send their children to that school rather than a school down the road? Will the inclusion of your sport improve the schools reputation? If you are going to try and 'sell' yourself to the head teacher or board of governors make sure you see it from the schools point of view. You may be the best coach in the country but unless you can show that you are going to benefit the school and the pupils, the school won't be interested. You must sound enthusiastic and be able to prove that you are the person for the job. Perhaps there are local schemes that will enable the school to benefit from new equipment or inter school competitions they can enter - make sure you know all the details of any such schemes. The school will also want as little disruption as possible to its every day running so you will need to sound confident - give the impression that you are capable not only of teaching your sport but that you are capable of dealing with any problems or paperwork as it arises.

ADULT LEARNERS

As the years go by, the percentage of adults with time for leisure activities is increasing. Working hours are becoming more flexible with a lot of people working from home with no set hours. This means that adults who were previously stuck in offices from 9-5, five days a week can now arrange their working life so that they have time for exercise. People who are retiring at sixtyish have the time, money and energy to pursue leisure activities. Consequently the number of adults you teach should also be increasing. When you are teaching adults remember that it may have been some years since anyone has told these adults what to do. Although you are in the student/teacher relationship try not to treat them as children. Don't patronize them, treat them as your equal and remember that unlike the children you teach, none of your adults will expect to become professional players - they are there for fun, exercise and companionship. Bear in mind also that some adults will not be taking part in

your particular sport just because they love your sport. They may be indifferent between tennis, squash, badminton or swimming. It could be that your lessons fit into their schedule more easily than another sport. What they are after is exercise or companionship.

Everyone now realizes the benefits of exercise and we now know that there is no upper age limit. These adults may provide a big percentage of your income so be nice to them, joke and have fun but don't be too overbearing. Remember that they are not as agile as they used to be, they will try their best but don't be too critical.

Be careful not to try and impress the adults too much. You may be very qualified in your field but remember that these adults are most likely very qualified in their particular field - don't try to out do them. Any communication must be a two way process - perhaps more so with adults than with children. Adults are much more likely to answer you back and to question what you say so give them a chance to answer you. If you ask a child a question you are likely to get a 'yes' or 'no' answer (some children will only shake their head or shrug their shoulders), adults will answer in sentences and they might be long sentences and lots of them - you may even wish you hadn't asked the question! Don't be aggressive - treat it as a friendly conversation between two friends but be aware that although the conversation may be friendly you may have to be more organised and work harder than when you teach children. Adults are much more likely to be critical of you - do you waste time, do you explain adequately, do you speak clearly? If you are having a bad day, it's fairly easy to get children to run around for 30 minutes while you get yourself together but adults aren't so easy to fool. Everything you do must have a purpose. If you have within your group, a bunch of adults who all know each other, be careful to include anyone who has come on their own. Adults often find it harder than children to mix and if some people feel continually left out they may leave the group.

Parents of young children may not be able to give you 100%. Children get ill, have school plays, parents have to attend school meetings etc. All of these will take priority over leisure activities

If you are an inexperienced coach you may feel uncomfortable correcting adults who are older than you. They may not want to be professional layers but they have chosen to attend a course with a coach rather than join a club where everyone plays solely for fun. Therefore you have to assume that they want to improve their game and you must correct them. Just because they are adults, don't assume that your explanations have to be any more complicated than when you teach children. Keep it simple. Adults are often self - taught. When they were children they learnt through trial and error so you will have to get the balance right between correcting basic faults and ignoring those faults which they can get away with otherwise you may find yourself correcting every single thing they do - if the technique is wrong but the result is okay you might decide it is best to leave it as it is.

KEY POINTS

1. Listen to parents
2. Look at the parents
3. Watch their body language
4. Use full sentences when answering
5. Don't confuse parents with jargon
6. Be positive with managers
7. Treat adults as equals and not as children
8. Communication is a two way process

CHAPTER 4

GETTING YOUNGSTERS TO UNDERSTAND YOU

It doesn't matter where you teach, be it in a state school as a full time member of staff or in a private club as a part time coach or a full time pro you have to be aware that some of the children you teach will only be there because they have to be. If it's in a state school the law says they have to take part, if it's a club it could be the parents who want them to learn.

If you are a physical education teacher in a school you are going to have to get used to the idea that most children won't be any good at sport and a large majority of them would rather not do it at all! This may make your life not as easy as you would like, but believe me, it's ten times worse for the child who detests sport - if you're hopeless at Maths or English you can sit in the class and look no different from anyone else - in fact you will probably be in a class where everyone is of the same standard. With sport you are in the same class as the experts - the natural athletes who can run, jump, swim, play tennis, football, hockey etc. The children who can't compete feel stupid and if they are forced to play in a team with 'super' athletes feel as though they are letting their team mates down and it has been known for those same team mates to get annoyed. The student may also be ashamed of their body for all sorts of reasons, too big, too skinny, too spotty, too tall and so on, this has no effect on their maths lessons but can ruin their physical education sessions.

Communicating with children involves different skills than communicating with adults. Children are not as experienced as adults at guessing what we mean and they can take things very literally. If adults can't understand our speech they can usually guess from our facial expression or body language what we mean. Children are not very good at doing this and will assume that you mean exactly what you say even if it doesn't make much sense! Consequently your speech has to be very clear and simple and you must be extremely clear in your own mind what it is you want them to understand from your conversation. One of the

most important things to remember is their name! You may teach hundreds of children, but there is nothing more soul destroying than being taught by someone who can't be bothered to remember who you are! For example, if an athlete's name is Sophia don't call her Sophie and if you have to write the name down, ask if you are unsure of the spelling. I have had years of people getting my name wrong and it is only since the popularity of Serena Williams that people now get it right. I've been called Selima, Seleena, Serina and many more!

Children will also want you to be assertive. Make quick and firm decisions but be fair and polite. Children need to know what they can and can't do. Once you've made a decision don't change your mind unless you have very good reasons which you can explain to the children.

DIRECTING THE SOUND

When you speak to a child, make sure it is the child you are speaking to. This probably seems obvious and a stupid thing to say but I've seen coaches who think they are talking to the children when they aren't. You need to look at the child, this is especially true if you are working outside. Sound, like everything else, doesn't carry as well in outdoor conditions. Just as wind alters the direction of a ball, so it will alter the direction of sound. If you throw a tennis ball up in the air in windy conditions it doesn't necessarily go where you expect it to go, the same is true of your voice. If you look directly at the child the sound stands a much better chance of going where you want it to go. Bear in mind that young children are going to be shorter than you so make sure that your words don't fly over their heads. However, when you look down at them to speak don't let your words go straight into the ground. If necessary crouch down to their level to speak to them (remembering to bend your legs). Don't just bend your back because this puts your head at the wrong angle and will give you aches and pains you don't need! (See fig 3, page 80)

If you wanted to score in football or hit a winning shot down the line in tennis you wouldn't aim the ball away from the goal or cross court!

Imagine that the sound coming out of your mouth is your ball and aim it where you want it to go. Now that we know how to direct the sound, we need to know how to get the sound to come out. The only place this sound can come out is through the mouth. The wider your mouth is open the more easily the sound can come out! Too many people nowadays, and this is especially true of young males, try to speak without opening their mouths. If you want to be a ventriloquist you are reading the wrong book!

OPEN YOUR MOUTH

If you want to kick a ball you move your leg, if you want to throw a ball you move your arm and if you want to speak you must move your mouth. The sound cannot come out of a closed mouth.

I'll show you what I mean. Try saying the following sentence with your mouth shut:

'Throw the ball high in the sky'

You might achieve a humming sound which goes up and down in pitch, it might even be a loud humming sound but no one will understand what you are trying to say because there will be no clear words.

Now say the same sentence but open your mouth as wide as you can. I can guarantee it sounded better but I bet you didn't open your mouth as wide as you thought you did. Go and get a mirror and say the same sentence for a third time. This time physically pull your chin down with your hand on the 'high' and 'sky' words and make sure you make a circle with your mouth on the 'throw' word.

Obviously when you are talking in front of people there is no need to be this extreme but this is how you should practice.

As we get older we are often too embarrassed to open our mouths because we think we look stupid. However, as with all the muscles in our body, the mouth (lips and tongue in particular) need to be exercised. As coaches you know the importance of keeping the rest of your body fit. You think nothing of skipping, lifting weights or stretching to help build up your muscles or to keep yourself supple. We owe it to ourselves to look after the organs of speech with as much care. There are voice exercises that exercise specific muscles in the face but the easiest way to exercise is to make funny faces. Stretch the lips and tongue as much as possible and see how far you can stick your tongue out!

(Incidentally, these face exercises also help us to stay younger looking for longer!)

Say the word 'eye' and open your mouth as wide as possible and make sure you say it out loud.

Now try saying this sentence out loud.

'My kite is flying high in the sky'

Every 'eye' sound needs an open mouth. With your mouth open on the 'eye' sound you should be able to fit your three middle fingers in your mouth.

Once the muscles have been exercised it will be easier to sound the final consonants in the words. (See fig 4, page 80) This improvement in articulation enables your voice to be heard without the need for shouting and has the added benefit of slowing your speech down. Bad articulation is usually caused by lazy muscles.

LISTENING

Remember to listen to the children. Strange as it may seem, they are often too frightened of their own coach to speak to him. They might feel that they are wasting your time - especially if you always appear to be in a hurry - or they might think that you will be annoyed with them for not understanding you in the first place. They most likely think they are the only person who doesn't understand and even if you ask, as you are explaining, if every one knows what you are talking about they may be too frightened to admit that they don't. Once they have plucked up the courage to speak to you, don't interrupt them, it may take them some time to get to the point, but wait - listen carefully and if you need to, prompt them to help them get to the point. When you answer make sure you explain things simply and clearly. Of course, it goes without saying, that in order to do this you must fully understand what it is you are trying to say. If you know you have a tendency to interrupt (and be honest) try saying 'yes', 'I see' or 'of course' every time you are tempted to open your mouth!

If you ask them a question and they start to answer you, make sure that you listen to the answer! All too often adults don't listen because children can be very long winded. We, as adults, assume we know what they are going to say and therefore we don't give their reply all of our attention. We may start to clear up, or get ready for the next manoeuvre or just look around. It can be very embarrassing when the child suddenly finishes and you realize that you don't really know what they have said. I'm sure we've all done it with our own children, but it's not too clever when it's not your child and you're being paid to teach them.

Have you ever been asked a question, perhaps at a social function, and then when we start to answer it, think, 'Why did they ask me, if they can't be bothered to listen to my answer'.

A colleague might ask 'Hi, John, how are you?' When you start to answer, the person asking turns to get a drink and then acknowledges some one else.

Make sure you don't get a reputation as being a coach who never listens to his athletes.

As with adults you need to actively listen to children, nod in agreement, look at them and if you really haven't got the time to listen, explain why and promise to listen next time and don't forget.

The next time you are coaching the child - ask them what they wanted.

The fact that you remembered will make them feel important.

EXPLAINING AND CORRECTING

When you want to explain or correct something, say what it is you are just about to explain.

For example: 'When you take a penalty ...' or 'the reason you drop the baton is ...'

Immediately the child is on the right wavelength. They don't miss the first part of the explanation because they are trying to work out what you are talking about.

If the child doesn't appear to understand don't continue with your explanation. Stop. Ask a few questions but don't sound annoyed. It may seem straight forward and simple to you but not every one will find the same. You have been playing your sport for many years and it should be second nature to you. For the children you are teaching it may be the first time they have ever come across the ideas you are trying to explain to them. Continually encourage the children during the sessions.

Talk to them all the time telling them that they are doing well. If you have a tendency to only speak to the child if you are correcting them - change your habit. They won't realize that silence from you means they are doing well. Imagine that you spend an hour trying very hard to play a sport and that during that whole hour your coach only spoke to you when you did things wrong. It doesn't matter if this only happens once or twice during the hour and that for fifty minutes of the hour you were brilliant. By the end of the session you wouldn't be sure if you were hopeless, very good or if the coach just didn't like talking to you.

Children (and adults) need to be told they are good. Explain things simply and keep it short. If your explanations are long and complicated the children will shut off and start thinking about something more interesting.

If a child asks a question and you don't understand what the child means, ask them a few friendly questions to try and get out of them what it is they are confused about. Don't get annoyed with them - they are not being deliberately awkward, they may find it difficult to put into words what is wrong or they may not know themselves what it is they don't understand. They just know that it doesn't make any sense to them.

Imagine the following conversation.

Coach: Do you know why that shot didn't work?

Child: Yes

Don't leave it there, the child may know why but might not know how he can put it right.

The session carries on and you would expect the child to correct their mistake but what if they don't? You would have to double check that they understand what is wrong AND that they know how to put it right.

Coach: That could be better

Child: Sorry, I know, but I don't know what I'm doing wrong.

Coach: You need to hit the shot with spin

Child: I know, but I can't do it

Sometimes children don't say what they mean, or mean what they say! You need to be patient and work through each problem a step at a time.

Correct one thing at a time so that you don't confuse children, but be prepared for the fact that while they are busy concentrating on the fault you have just brought to their attention, they may do something else wrong instead! Be patient with them. Never let them leave the session feeling that every thing they have done is wrong - even if it was. Remember that we all have days when things go wrong, including you.

Find something pleasant to say to them or else they might not come back.

Always praise the athlete when they try hard even if they don't totally succeed in correcting what was wrong. When they win a match, let them enjoy their success. If some aspects of their game could have been better, there will plenty of time in the future to discuss it. Sport should always be fun - so let the athlete relish any success.

FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Children's use of vocabulary isn't as efficient as adults and so they depend a lot on our facial expressions. They can tell from our face if we are serious or are joking but to be able to do this they must be able to see your face. This is another important reason why you must look at the child when you are speaking to them (the other being to direct the sound). Look at the child, smile and then speak clearly. If you smile at them before you speak, you will make them more receptive to what you are about to say. They will anticipate that you are going to say something pleasant and will listen!

Practice using your face to express yourself by doing the following exercises.

1. Imagine that you think someone is calling you from another room but you're not sure.

Listen carefully - is it your name you can hear?

2. Now use your eyes - follow a butterfly flying around the room, it lands on your shoulder.
3. Now your mouth, imagine you eating a piece of chocolate, now imagine you are eating the food you hate the most! Show your disgust on your face.
4. Finally, imagine you have just scored the perfect goal, or hit the perfect shot - let your face show your delight.

SLOWLY

Make an effort not to talk too fast - most people speak much too quickly. Children need longer to take in what you have said than adults do. They are not as quick at picking up nuances in our voice and need longer to work out exactly what we mean. We all think we speak more slowly than we actually do.

Say the following sentences and remember to open your mouth.

‘Stephanie loves her job, and is very pleased that she did not train to become an accountant. She also enjoys her tennis lessons but sometimes thinks that her tennis coach makes her work too hard by making her run after every ball. Stephanie only wants to learn to play tennis so that she can go on a tennis holiday with her sister, who is too young to go on her own.’

This time say it out loud and time yourself.

It should take about 28 seconds. If you are much quicker than this the children will not have time to take in what you have said. To slow yourself down try sounding all the consonants in the words, pause after every comma and full stop and remember that ‘every’ is three syllables long and not two (Evry). Open your mouth on the ‘eye’ sounds, the ‘too’ should be a long sound to differentiate it from a ‘to’.

In the example I have underlined the consonant sounds and marked the pauses.

‘Stephanie loves her job, / and is very pleased that she did not train to become / an accountant. She also enjoys her tennis lessons / but sometimes thinks that her tennis coach makes her work too hard by making her run after every ball. / Stephanie only wants to learn to play tennis so that she can go on a tennis holiday with her sister, / who is too young to go on her own.’

PAUSING

We need to pause after each new thought. In the previous example you need to pause after the first sentence. If you rush into the second sentence by the time you get to the end the listeners will know that Stephanie is pleased not to be something but they may not have caught that it was an accountant. If you talk for too long without pausing, people, especially children will lose interest, their brains need time to think about what you have said. Trying to listen to someone who hardly ever pauses is hard work, the listener has to try and take in what you have just said at the same time as listening to the next sentence. After a while they will give up!

In tennis you pause after a point, you get your breath back and give the spectators a chance to appreciate your last fantastic shot. The same applies in any sport, footballers stop playing when a goal is scored, they recover their composure and the fans go wild. Cricket, gymnastics, basketball etc are all the same. When we are speaking we must also pause. This gives us a chance to take a breath and think ahead about the next thing we are going to say and gives the audience time to take in what we have said and perhaps laugh, groan or simply pull a face! All speakers need this feedback (from an audience or an individual) so that we can judge if the listener has understood what we have said. If we didn't bother to pause we could talk for a very long time before we realize that no one understands what we are saying.

Pausing is also a very good way of making important points stand out. If we pause before we say an important word, the children have a chance to anticipate what we are going to say. Likewise if we pause after an important word, the children have time to think about what we have said.

To really make a point stand out, we can pause before and after we have said it. If you want to encourage a group of children you might say:

‘If you can hit the cone five times in a row I will run around the court on one leg!

You need to be like an entertainer and add some drama to get their attention.

GOALS

Find out what the children you coach expect from their sessions with you and act accordingly. If they or their parents have mentioned that their child wants to coach, compete, be professional or take part just for fun remember and treat them in a suitable way. If they want to coach, let them help out occasionally, perhaps with younger players. If they want to compete, find competitions for them to take part in, as the coach you will be expected to know where, when and how. If *you* don't know, there are plenty of coaches out there who do know! If the child is there purely for fun, don't put pressure on them to win all the time. If you forget or ignore their goals don't expect the child to take any notice of you or to respect you. If you teach a group and you have been told that one of the children wants to become a coach, try to ask that individual to help you when you need help - don't ask a child who is only there because their best friend is there. Every time you ask the child to do something which is contrary to their aim, or if you ask another child to help you out when you need help, the child will feel that you have no interest in them and will give up trying. It is also a good idea to re-establish what these goals are every six months or so. A child who starts out wanting to play just for fun may discover they have a natural talent and want to turn

professional. Conversely, a child who was determined to be world number one may discover that he can't stand the discipline involved and may now just want to play for fun.

TRUST

As you build a relationship of trust with the child, you will find that the child will often take more notice of what you say than they do of what their parents say. An example of this is my own daughter who hated eating breakfast. I told her time and time again that she must eat before she played tennis in the mornings but she wouldn't listen. As soon as her tennis coach told her she must eat breakfast before playing - she ate breakfast! But still only on tennis days!

The child may come to you with problems that are not directly related to your sport. Make sure that you listen - if something is upsetting them it will affect their performance in any case and they may feel that you are the only person they can talk to. You may not be able to help but if it is a serious problem you can always suggest that they talk to someone who is an expert in the field.

To be a successful coach you need your pupils to tell you when they don't understand you or can't do something you have asked them to do.

They need to feel that they can trust you and that you won't make fun of them or tell them off. In return you need to be open with them – talk about yourself. Talk about what was on television last night or what our favourite pop song is.

However, it is very important, not to become too friendly! You are in a position of trust and you must never forget that.

KEY POINTS

1. Look at the child
2. Open your mouth
3. Explain things simply
4. Speak slowly
5. Encourage children all the time
6. Pause and give everyone a chance to think about what you have said
7. Don't get annoyed if the children don't understand
8. Remember what the goals of your athletes are and act upon them.

CHAPTER 5

DON'T MUMBLE!

Articulation is the art of speaking and involves the study of the muscles we use for speech. Good articulation has three advantages.

1 It enables us to speak for long periods of time without tiring.

As in any sport, muscles used correctly can work more effectively for much longer than muscles used incorrectly.

2 The more these muscles are exercised the clearer the speech becomes and listeners find it much easier to understand you. As in sport - the fitter you are the easier it becomes.

3 It enables you and the audience to concentrate more on the content of what you are saying rather than how you are saying it - they don't need to decipher it. If your technique is good in sport you can concentrate on winning - you don't need to worry about how to make the shot.

LAZINESS

Many problems of articulation are caused by bad habits and laziness. We may mumble our words or perhaps speak out of the corner of our mouth because we want to sound like our friends - it may not be fashionable among our peers to speak clearly. However, most cases of bad articulation are caused, not by design, but simply by laziness. We know what we are saying so we expect other people to know what we mean. We just can't be bothered to use our mouths. Look at the following example: suppose you are serving in tennis, the ball hits the net because you were too lazy to stretch your arm up would you then expect to win the point because you knew where you wanted the ball to go. It would be ludicrous but the

principle is the same. There is no reason why people should know in advance what you are going to say, therefore you must speak clearly and use your facial muscles to produce good clear speech.

ORGANS OF SPEECH

There are five organs of speech

1. The tongue
2. The lips
3. The teeth
4. The soft palate
5. The hard palate

As the sound enters the mouth these organs of speech alter the sound.

The lips can be moved forwards and backwards and can change the shape of the mouth.

The tongue is the only muscle in the body connected directly to a bone, it can move in and out, from side to side, it can twist and can move very quickly.

The teeth cannot move but are used in conjunction with the lips and tongue. We notice the importance of teeth when we listen to young children who are waiting for the tooth fairy to arrive or to more elderly people whose teeth have unfortunately not managed to reach such an old age as they have!

The soft palate is the back of the roof of the mouth. It can be lowered or raised for differing sounds.

The hard palate is the front of the roof of the mouth and cannot move.

It is the bony bit near the teeth and like the teeth it is used in conjunction with the tongue.

Try saying these two simple words: AT ALL

These two little words represent four sounds and the tongue moves so quickly to produce four sounds that we don't notice. We have 'a' as in cat, 't' as in tuh, 'aw' as in crawl and 'l' as in luh.

VOWEL SOUNDS

Speech sounds are either vowel sounds or consonant sounds. We have five vowels, a,e,i,o, and u but as many as twenty six different vowel sounds. For example, take the vowel 'a', now imagine its sound in the following words, car, cat and way. The same with the 'e' in bet and bee.

Each sound is different and it is the sound that is important not the name of the letter. The breath for vowel sounds comes up through the vocal cords and straight out through the mouth. The different sounds are made by altering the positions of the tongue and lips. Note that for these vowel sounds the organs of speech never touch each other. The teeth shouldn't touch the lips, the tongue shouldn't touch the hard palate and the lips don't touch each other. Sometimes the tongue may rest behind the bottom teeth although technically it shouldn't.

For those of you who might be interested in more technical details, there are three types of vowel sounds.

If the position of the lips and tongue do not alter during the sound it is a monophthong. An example is 'ee'. Once the sound has been started the mouth stays in the same position.

If the position of the lips and tongue alter from one position to another, it is a diphthong. An example is the sound 'ay'. The mouth closes slightly.

If there are three positions, it is a triphthong. An example of this is 'our' which is often mispronounced as 'are' which is only a monophthong.

Look in the mirror as you say the above words.

CONSONANT SOUND

A consonant sound comes up through the vocal cords and is then stopped in the mouth by the contact of two of the organs of speech. We have to remember that it is the sound of the consonant and not the letter name that is important. The fourth letter of the alphabet is called 'dee' but its sound is not dee but more of a duh.

To achieve good articulation each word must be finished right to the last syllable and to the final consonant. This articulation helps us to project our voice and this means that we do not have to shout which is obviously beneficial to us. Being able to use our organs of speech correctly enables the sound to carry further, just as using the correct grip will make hitting a tennis ball or golf ball easier and will enable it to go further. The wrong technique will give you aches and pains just as shouting will give you a sore throat.

The organs of speech need as much training and care as any other muscles in the body.

Try the sounds below out loud to see how the organs of speech work.

The two lips touching produce the 'p', 'b' and 'm' sounds - (puh, buh and muh)

The teeth and lips touching create a 'f' or 'v' sound.

The tongue and hard palate make a 'd', 't', 'n' or 'l' sound.

The tongue and soft palate produce the 'k' and 'g' sounds.

EXERCISE AND DRILLS

In order to correct lazy speech we have to practice and make the muscles work effectively. In any sport there are drills which you perform in practice over and over again but that you wouldn't dream of reproducing in a match. Dribbling around cones in football, running and picking up tennis balls in tennis and stretching in dancing are all examples of routine drills which have to be performed daily but you wouldn't see any of the Manchester United players running around cones during a match at Old Trafford. It goes without saying that there is no point in doing any of these drills if you do not give 100%. The same is true of speech drills. There is no point in whispering them or speaking quickly so that you can get them finished in a hurry! They have to be performed out loud and slowly if they are to do you any good. Incidentally, I would never expect you to do any of these drills in public, this is because when you do these drills you must open your mouth as wide as possible which if done correctly will result in you making funny faces.

Try to speak to an object when you do these drills, it doesn't matter what it is, it could be a chair, a teddy bear, a clock or a telephone.

Focus on the object - look at it and direct the sound towards that object.

Below are two different drills for vowel sounds. Make sure they are repeated out loud.

'I' sound pronounced 'eye'

My shot is a mile wide of the line. Mouth open as wide as it will go.

Pull your jaw down with your hand. (See fig 4, page 78)

'O' sound pronounced 'oh'

Oh dear, my throw is too slow and too low. For the 'oh' sound you need a round mouth

The following are consonant exercises. You must make sure that you sound the first and last consonant in each word. Rather like you do when shouting at a child or a dog!

I need to win the first point at the net.

I would have got a birdie at the third but my putt went long.

CORRECT NUMBER OF SYLLABLES

We need to be very careful not to cut words short. Quite often we are in such a hurry to finish what we are saying that we miss out parts of words. Examples of this can be seen in the following words:

1. 'Secretary' which is often shortened to 'secretry'. Instead of giving it four syllables it is only given three.
2. 'Every' is nearly always pronounced 'Evry'. It should have three syllables but is only given two.
3. 'Extraordinary' should be pronounced as 'ex-tra-or-di-na-ry' but is often pronounced as 'ex-tro-di-na-ry'. It should have six syllables not five.

While we must not miss out parts of words, we must also be careful not to add syllables that are not there. The word 'athlete' is a good example of this. People who do not speak correctly often say 'athlelete' making the word three syllables long when it should only be two. Other examples are umbrella, pronounced umberella and toddler pronounced toddeler.

Another example of a word which is mispronounced is 'tomorrow', this is often pronounced 'tamorrow', we lose the long vowel sound 'oo'.

When hitting a ground stroke you don't stop your arm the minute the racket hits the ball, a golfer also knows the value of swinging through the ball. Your breath needs to be long enough for the sound, but no longer. Take in just the right amount of air.

SWIMMING COACHES

A special note here for swimming coaches. Swimming coaches perhaps more than coaches of other sports need to be heard and understood. When you are talking to your pupils you need to make sure you look at them – if they happen to be in the swimming pool don't talk over their heads, but also be very careful not to speak to the floor. Your head is likely to be in the downward position but make sure that your words don't hit the ground.

Swimming pools have very different acoustics from other teaching environments. Glass and tiles produce a sound which will echo, consequently you will need to articulate well. You will need to articulate well and balance the need for volume (so that you can be heard above the sound of the water) with the degree of echo. The more the echo, the less volume is needed. It will also help to talk in a lower register rather than a high pitched voice.

TALENT

A person may have a natural talent for playing a sport, be it tennis, soccer, golf or swimming but as any coach knows unless the player learns some basic techniques he is unlikely to ever win a major title or championship. We can all speak, some of us very loudly, but unless we can articulate well people will be forever asking us to repeat what we have just said.

The most enthusiastic amateur is not going to be world number one without good technique and this technique must be practiced.

Unfortunately there are no short cuts, speaking also requires us to practice the basic techniques.

KEY POINTS

1. Exercise the organs of speech. Particularly the lips and the tongue.
2. Don't cut words short
3. Take in the right amount of air.
4. Don't put extra syllables in words.

CHAPTER 6

HELP - LOTS OF PEOPLE WANT TO LISTEN TO ME!

This chapter applies equally to players and coaches alike. Players are often expected to 'say a few words' when accepting awards or trophies.

The more successful an athlete you are, the more you will have to speak.

If you teach in a school you may have to give a short speech when handing out awards.

Speaking in public isn't like chatting to friends, to speak in public your speech must be clear and focused. You chat to a friend for fun - when you give a talk you have a responsibility to your audience. They must be able to hear you and understand you.

As I said at the beginning of the book, unfortunately sports coaches do more than coach their chosen sport. At some point in your career you will have to speak to groups of people. Perhaps you've been invited to a school to give a talk or you are trying to get support - financial or otherwise - from local businesses. Development programmes are very keen on asking coaches (those still training and those who are already qualified but are improving their skills) to 'give a presentation'.

These coaches may be given a few ideas about what to include in this presentation but no help is given on how to say it.

For some reason it is considered important for a coach to be able to give a presentation but no one offers any help or guidance. Would a swimming coach get a child to jump in the water, tell them to swim 50 meters backstroke but not show them how to do it? Of course not!

The trouble with this approach to giving presentations is that the coaches who love doing these presentations are those who already love the sound of their own voice, whilst those who are quieter and more nervous become even more so!

AUDIENCE

The first thing you must do is find out what sort of audience you will have. Is it young, old, knowledgeable about your sport or completely clueless? If the audience is not particularly interested in sport be careful not to use too much sports jargon. If you are talking to young children, perhaps in a school hall or classroom, don't be frightened to sit on the floor - get down to their level. Children have a very short concentration span, so keep the talk interesting and try to include them in your talk. Ask questions and encourage them to join in. (See fig 5, page 81)

The audience won't care if you make a mistake, it may seem like a huge mistake to you but unless you stand there and make huge apologies they probably won't even notice! So if possible ignore it and carry on. Try not to stop and say "sorry" which will only draw attention to your mistake. If you can carry on talking without any hesitation they will even think that they heard you wrong and that it was their mistake!

Think of your talk as a conversation with lots of people - talk *to* the audience but not *at* them. Let them react - give them time to nod, smile, laugh etc. Imagine a friend asks you what the benefits of coaching your sport to school children would be you'd answer easily with lots of ideas. The information you give in a talk is the same information and your audience wants to hear it. The main difference is that the audience don't get to join in as your friends would and as you don't get their feedback to motivate you, you need to concentrate much more on what you are saying and have a plan so that your talk has a beginning, a middle and an end.

PAUSE

The main criticism of anyone speaking in public is that they tend to speak too fast. Most of us need to slow down and make good use of the pause. Pausing helps you by giving you the chance to take a breath and think about what you are going to say next. In any sport, once a

point or goal has been scored, play stops, the player takes a breath and the spectators have a chance to acknowledge the fantastic shot or goal by clapping and cheering. Pausing during speech gives us a chance to take a breath and gives the audience time to digest what you have just said - they may even want to laugh or groan.

Pausing also helps us to emphasize important words. By pausing before an important word, you are leaving the audience in suspense - trying to guess what you are about to say next. If you pause after an important word, you give the audience a chance to reflect on what you have just said - you are giving it time to sink in. Pausing before and after a word gives the audience a chance to do both! While you are pausing the audience also has a chance to think, 'Oh yes! I see what he means', and if you've said something funny they might laugh!

Another good use of the pause is if you feel like the audience is beginning to wander. Just stop! However, don't use this too often as the novelty soon wears off.

PACE and PITCH

If you want to inject a feeling of excitement or anger, speed up just a little and raise the pitch of your voice. More serious topics should be approached more slowly and with a lower pitch. It is worth remembering that the larger the venue, the slower you will need to speak. Imagine your words travelling to the back of the hall, you need to open your mouth wide and give the words time to reach the people in the back row.

The audience does not have the advantage of knowing your line of thought, therefore they cannot easily anticipate what you are going to say. If you want to share your images you will have to give them time to hear your words.

We should always try to vary the pace at which we speak, someone who speaks slowly all the time is just as hard to listen to as someone who speaks quickly all the time. Think about what you are saying and alter the speed accordingly. If you speak too quickly you will give the

impression that you feel you don't deserve to be listened to and that you want to get your words out as quickly as possible before anyone notices!

All speech needs to sound fluent, and one way of making your speech sound fluent even when you are terrified is to speed up on the small unimportant words, such as 'is', 'it' and 'the', and take more care with larger more important key words.

A child learning to read gives every word the same time value. 'The cat sits on the mat' is read as six equal words. Children do not anticipate what the next word is, so they give every word the same length. Adults tend to do this if they are sight reading. How often have you heard people start a sentence and then stop and restart it when they suddenly realize what the sentence is supposed to mean? Up until that point they have taken every word at face value. Going back to 'the cat sat on the mat', an adult might group the words as follows: 'the cat / sat / on the / mat'. The first 'the' is unimportant, 'cat' is important, 'sat' is important, 'on the' can be run in together and 'mat' is important.

RESONANCE

In order to fill a large space with sound you must learn to use your resonators. These resonators are all the hollow spaces above the larynx.

The sound vibrates against these hollow spaces and these vibrations cause the voice to resonate. These resonators amplify the sound that comes up through the vocal cords just as a radio needs speakers. Without these resonators no one would hear the sound you make. The mouth is the most important resonator because it is the largest, all of our sounds come out through it and the movement of the lips and the tongue change the shape of it. To exercise your resonators you need to practice the following sounds: 'n', 'm' and 'ng'. Remember, it is the sounds not the names of the letters that is important. A long humming sound is required.

Practice humming now - if you do it correctly and place your hand on the top of your head you should feel the vibration.

Now say the following line with an exaggerated hum on the 'm' and 'n' sounds.

The New York Marathon means I run many miles.

It should sound like this:

The NNNew York MMMMarathon mmmeans I runn mmannny mmmiles.

My mummy made me swim a mile.

Mmmy mmmummmmy mmmade mmme swimmm a mmmile.

LOOK AND AIM

Look at your audience. Don't lower your head to talk to the ground unless you are giving your speech to a group of mice! Remember you aim the ball where you want it to go - aim your words where you want them to go. If you are using your notes don't hide your face with them and don't speak into them. Make sure the sound goes over the top of your notes and let the audience see your face. They need to be able to see if you are serious, joking, angry etc. You also need to open your mouth. Remember that you can't kick a ball if you don't move your leg. The words can't be directed in any direction if they can't get out of your mouth in the first place. (see fig 6, page 81)

CONSONANTS

Sound the last consonant sound in every word. It is often the last letter of a word that decides the word. If you don't emphasize the last letter of the following examples the audience at the back will end up trying to guess what you are saying.

The difference between 'ant' or 'and' is difficult to decipher if you miss off the last sound, all you can hear is 'an...' The same can be said of 'bug', 'but' and 'bud', all the audience will hear is 'bu?' Making sure you sound these final consonant sounds is the major factor which will improve your projection. Taking the time to finish to these words correctly will also slow your speech down.

VOWELS

The vowel sounds are just as important, particularly the 'eye' and the 'oh' sounds. The mouth must be wide open for the first and in the shape of a circle for the second.

MOVEMENT AND FACIAL EXPRESSION

When you are giving a talk the less movement you use the better. A person who continually moves around (swaying from one foot to the other, or putting one hand behind your back and then the other one etc) can be very annoying to try to listen to. However, don't concentrate so much on not moving that you forget what you want to say you need to look natural, don't stand so that you look like a statue. Practice in front of a mirror or a friend and be aware of any irritating movements you may have. Perhaps you fiddle with the bottom of your jacket with your hand, move your feet from side to side, flick your hair back or play with your earrings. If you do need to make a gesture to emphasis an important point make sure it is a deliberate gesture but don't practice it too much. Any gestures used need to look spontaneous (even if they are rehearsed).

Only use body movement if you really must. There is nothing more irritating to a listener than a speaker who fidgets. Try to keep your hands still and sit or stand relaxed, not too tense. When you stand don't lock your knees, this tensing of the muscles in the back of your legs will cause tension up your back and in to your shoulders which will restrict your breath and

make speaking much more difficult. Your knees shouldn't take the weight of your body, it is the job of your feet and this should be done on both feet without too much weight on the heels of your feet.

Oddly enough, athletes have a tendency to stand with their feet wide apart when talking and tend to move from side to side, possibly because they are ready to move off very quickly! This may be fine when preparing to receive serve in tennis or if preparing for the triple jump but not too good for speaking.

If you are saying something serious and want to be taken seriously then remember to look serious, don't have a stupid grin on your face. If you are saying something funny - smile! Whatever you do - don't look terrified. We have already noted earlier in the book that people who stand to attention (soldiers, ballerinas, gymnasts etc.) don't talk at the same time as tensing all their muscles - so be relaxed

CLOTHING

Clothing plays a very important part in your ability to speak well! As a coach you will spend most of your working life in comfortable clothes that you find easy to move in. If you've just finished a coaching session when you are talking to your group you will still be dressed in clothes you can move around in and this will help your speaking. However if you need to be more presentable you may be dressed in clothes which you hardly ever wear.

Your trousers may be slightly tighter around the waist than your tracksuit bottoms. Your shirt might have a tight collar and the tie will make it feel even tighter. How on earth can you expect to breathe – your lungs need room to expand, your vocal cords need to be able to vibrate - no wonder you're frightened to speak, I'd be frightened to move in case a button pops off!

Ladies are just as bad, tight skirts and trousers, perhaps no collar or tie but necklaces, bracelets even earrings that weigh us down and jangle whenever we move. Hairstyles that make us too frightened to move our head in case we put a hair out of place - you don't need to be worried about your hair when out on the playing field - if it gets in your eyes you just push it back or quickly rearrange the hairclip (no need for mirrors), all of a sudden you are in a situation where you imagine that every hair out of place is important - it isn't! We also wear high heeled shoes that throw us off balance therefore making our bodies tense - with these heels we feel as though we might fall over. In your day to day life you can walk or run faster than most other people and now you are in the strange position where your feet don't feel as though they belong to you.

The answer is to loosen the tie slightly, go easy on the jewellery and relax the feet in those high heels. Clenched, squashed feet will tense all your muscles from your feet up to your throat. Shoes must be comfortable (for ladies and gentlemen) and if it at all possible take your shoes off! This may be possible if you are sitting behind a desk or standing behind a podium. You can look stunning and smart but be comfortable. When you are getting ready to attend a formal event, as well as making sure that you look good, try sitting down a few times and then standing up to practice your speech. How do you feel - do your feet hurt? Does your skirt feel too tight? Does your dress crease? Don't wait until you get to the function and then think, 'why did I wear this?'

A lot of coaches find it very easy to talk to a group of players on the football pitch, tennis court or golf course but wonder why they find it inhibiting to talk to the same group in a formal situation. Clothing plays a major part, if you feel comfortable, you are more likely to be relaxed and therefore be more confident.

CONTENT OF TALK

Every talk needs an introduction, a middle and an end. When you get near the end of your talk resist the temptation to rush. You may be relieved to get to the end but remember it is the last thing that you say to the audience, that they will remember the easiest, so end on a positive note. To the audience the ending is as important, if not more important, than the beginning of your talk. Therefore end the talk as forcefully as you started. You may know how your talk is going to end - but your audience don't. Stay focused right to the end - don't speed up or end in a whisper. Think of your talk as a long joke - it won't be very effective if your audience don't hear the punch line at the end. Avoid the use of 'ums' and 'ers' in your speech (or any other favourite word such as 'alright' or 'okay'). The audience will be waiting for the next 'um' or 'okay' rather than listening to what you are saying. If you find it impossible to avoid altogether try thinking 'um' or 'okay' instead of saying it. I know of a group of school children who were taught by a teacher who kept saying 'alright'. At the beginning of her class they would make a table in their notebooks and put a tick every time she said 'alright'. I'm not sure if they ever learnt anything during her class so be warned!

Give yourself time to prepare what you want to say. Don't wait for last minute inspiration - it rarely arrives. The professional speakers who appear to talk without preparation are generally using old speeches that they adapt to suit the occasion. Also be wary of writing down every word you want to say then memorizing it. For a start it will sound false, we write differently than we speak. We tend not to write in a chatty way, if we were to write down what we say and then read it back we would want to alter it. We write 'I am', but we say 'I'm'. Favourite words would crop up all the time and the sentences would be short. A writer of

English would tell you to find another word which means the same and to lengthen the sentences. All very well for a written English exam but it wouldn't *sound* natural

You also have to be aware of how you would cope if you forgot your words. Would you have to go back to the beginning or could you improvise until the end. It is also very difficult to alter your talk to unforeseen circumstances. For example, if you are expecting an elderly audience and you discover they are younger than anticipated or if someone interrupts you and disagrees with you, what would you do, could you change your talk? If you are not very experienced your mind will be too busy trying to remember the words to be able to alter the content.

With today's technology we don't have to use our memories as much as our parents or grandparents did, we don't memorize our times tables any more (we have calculators) and with the advent of mobile phones, we don't even have to remember anyone's phone number. Only use your memory if it is in constant use and can be relied upon.

Sometimes you will want to or need to use notes when you are speaking.

It is assumed that because a person can read to themselves adequately well they can automatically read aloud just as effectively. Wrong! When we read to ourselves our brain goes very fast and it's not possible for our mouths to keep up at that speed.

READING ALOUD

You may have to read aloud from a piece you've either never seen before or you've only had a chance to glance through. When reading aloud in these circumstances there are a few points to make note of.

Hold the piece you are reading so that it does not hide your face and don't hold it so low that your mouth is pointing at the ground.

Look at your audience on the important words, but try to avoid looking up and down like a yo-yo. If you can't manage to look up without your losing your place at least look up at the

audience on the first words of each paragraph and end your reading by looking at the audience.

As with any kind of speaking, you have to understand what you are saying. Pick out a few key words which you would like to emphasize. (Emphasizing is dealt with in chapter 2). For the moment we'll assume that on these key words you will just make eye contact with the audience so look up at them. To avoid speaking too fast, every time you come across a full stop or a comma, say 'full stop' or 'comma' to yourself.

In spite of the popularity of Australian television programmes, the tendency is for our voices to drop down as we reach the end of a sentence. Consequently, we must make the effort to lift the voice at the start of each new paragraph. (See fig 7, page 81).

If you are using notes which are only there to jog your memory don't be frightened to look at them but make sure you only write on one side of the card. If you write on both sides you can guarantee that when you glance at the notes you will be reading the wrong side! Trying to hide the notes and then fumbling around to sneak a glance does not give a very professional impression. Have your notes in front of you - don't fiddle with them, look at them when you need to and don't try to hide them. If you have notes which you want to read from (rather than just to use as reminders), it is helpful to underline the parts you want to look up on. Go through your speech and pick out the important words and underline them. Also make sure that you underline the first sentence and the last sentence. This will give your speech a more natural feel to it and will give you more confidence.

If you need to have a drink, avoid cold water, warm water is much better. Dairy products should also be avoided as they cause mucus to form. If you want a drink that will relax your vocal cords try honey and lemon.

ENJOY

Enjoy speaking. Remember that you are talking about your sport. Some people can talk for a long time giving a very intellectual talk full of facts and figures. Other people find it difficult to present facts and figures and get in a muddle when they try. These people often think they have nothing interesting to say, however, when they start to talk about their sport (tennis, football, badminton, cricket, baseball etc) they say it with such enthusiasm that as soon as they have finished you want to go out and try your hand at their particular sport! I know which one I would prefer to listen to. If you smile and sound enthusiastic every one will enjoy your talk - if you can't get enthused about it how can you expect anyone else to?

KEY POINTS

1. What sort of audience is it?
2. Speak slowly
3. Look at the audience
4. Stand or sit still
5. Wear comfortable clothing
6. Avoid the use of favourite words
7. Don't hide your face in your notes
8. Prepare your speech
9. Everything you say should have a purpose, don't talk just for the sake of it.
10. Sound enthusiastic.

CHAPTER 7

PUTTING THEM RIGHT

Athletes can only improve their performance if their coach corrects any faults they may have. It is going to do the athlete no good whatsoever to practice hour after hour, day after day if he is doing the wrong thing. It doesn't matter how good a coach you are, or what sport you teach (tennis, football, dancing, gymnastics, golf etc.) nobody is going to understand you all of the time and if they do understand what you want them to do, they won't be able to do it every single time. When this happens you will have to correct them but never correct an athlete without a reason or explanation. As a coach you are there to help improve an athletes performance, if you criticize with no explanation you are helping no one. Remember though, to keep these explanations as simple as possible.

DON'T EMBARRASS

If it is to be anything more than a simple correction, try to speak to the athlete when no one else is listening. This is especially true if you want to complain about their overall attitude, lack of concentration, lack of practice, bad time keeping etc. By doing this you will have less chance of embarrassing the player, which means they will be more inclined to listen and will feel more able to ask you questions and put their point of view - they may have personal reasons for behaving as they do. If you make the athlete feel or look stupid in front of other athletes or parents, the athletes listening and the athlete in question will resent you. If you find that athletes seem not to care when you correct them - pause and look around, are you embarrassing the athlete in front of his peers or parents? Nobody likes to look a fool and so they will pretend they don't care about what you are saying.

Remember that we all have off days and if the athlete really has messed up make sure that there is no underlying reason why before you start shouting at him, perhaps the athlete is unwell or has received some bad news. You may find that the athlete doesn't want to tell you he has a badly bruised foot or that a relative has just passed away because he feels he is making excuses. This is where a good relationship between coach and player is required - if they trust you they will talk to you.

There are bound to be times when you have to say some unkind things about his game but there is no need to say them unkindly. Think how you would feel - or would have felt at that age. Don't shout or be aggressive, take your time and always be prepared to explain your reasons.

LOSING

If the child loses an important match or a match that they should have won easily, resist the temptation to shout. If he has any potential he will realize that he has done badly without you telling him. If you are watching the match and your athlete can see you, stay clam - even if they are losing. The last thing they need to see is their coach panicking. Encourage them if it is allowed, if it's not just smile and look confident. Show that you have complete confidence in them to turn it around, winning is all about confidence and if you look confident maybe it will rub off on them! If you look like you have given up you can't expect them to carry on fighting. Once the match is over and the athlete has lost, the player will need your support, so try to find at least one positive thing to say and keep your emotions under control.

The post mortem can wait for another time. If the player appears to be very upset, take charge of the situation, have a positive plan of action, don't just tell them it'll be fine next time. Tell them that during their next lesson you will go through any problems they have and that you will devise a training schedule for them - give them hope.

If you coach a team, rather than individuals, and the team has lost, don't pick on one player. Make sure that the team stick together and don't blame each other. They are all in it together and it is your job to make sure they keep talking to each other and that they stay positive.

Conversely, if the child wins a very hard match which they weren't expecting to win, don't expect him to take too much notice of anything you say immediately afterwards. He will be much too much excited!

PLENTY OF TIME

When you want to explain something to the athlete make sure that the athlete has the time to listen to you and concentrate on what you are saying. If you want the athlete to take notice of you don't try to explain things when they are getting ready to leave. You might expect them to hang on for a few more minutes, especially if they are serious about their sport, but they may have parents waiting for them or public transport to catch. Bear in mind that you don't always relish the thought of players trying to talk to you at the end of the session – you may have other things planned (other lessons to get to or your own children to collect from school etc.) and so might they. When you do talk to the athlete, ask them if they have time to stop and talk to you.

Don't say it will only take a few minutes if it is likely to be longer.

You might get them to stay behind but they won't listen to you once you go past a few minutes. Give yourself time to explain fully what needs to change and why and give them a chance to ask you questions. Just as it is important to make sure the athlete has time to listen to you, make sure you have time to explain thoroughly to him. It may well take you a lot longer than you first anticipate, especially if the athlete asks you a lot of questions. Be prepared to demonstrate where the athlete is going wrong, so don't wait until either you or the player (or both of you) have packed all your equipment away.

If the player comes to you with a problem and you really haven't got time to explain fully, make sure that you arrange a convenient time for both of you to meet so that you can help the athlete. If nothing else can be arranged, promise to sort it out at the beginning of the next session - and don't break your promise! Make a note of it in your diary if it will help you to remember.

Rushed explanations can easily be misunderstood and if you do not take your time the athlete will end up more confused than ever.

DON'T GET PERSONAL

When correcting athletes, make sure that you don't make the criticism personal, by all means correct their technique, complain about their stamina or question their motivation but don't criticize them personally. You may not like their choice of clothes, the smell of their perfume or after shave, their hair cut or even the number and placing of their body piercings but unless any of these things physically hinder the athletes sporting performance - keep quiet!

Be careful not to say to someone 'you're unfit', when you what you mean is 'you seem to have trouble towards the end of the session'. Don't say 'you're unreliable' when you mean 'you are often late'. Don't generalize, telling someone that they are 'unfit' may seem the same as saying 'you seem to have trouble at the end of the session' but to the athlete the first is a personal criticism, whereas the second recognizes that the athlete has a specific problem. A tennis player may appear to give up half way through the session, his ground strokes lose all of their power and he hits most of his shots out of court, to an outsider it looks as though he has got fed up or is terribly unfit and can't cope with an hour session. It could be, however, that his racket hand is bruised and he could hardly hold the racket. If the coach assumes he is just 'unfit' the problem may never be sorted out, however, if the coach takes the time to ask the athlete why this is happening and then listens to the answer the problem

can be solved. In this case, after a few weeks the player could give 100% for the whole session.

Telling someone that they are 'unreliable' when they are sometimes late can also be very hurtful. If they have to rely on other people to get them to their lesson there may be nothing they can do about it. It may be that their parents always collect them late from school or perhaps the public transport is unreliable. If you need to be negative, try and explain the consequences of what they are doing wrong. For example: 'By being late you are.....'

Think before you criticize

.

BE POSITIVE

Always try to find something positive to say. No matter how badly they have performed, they must have done one little thing right - find it and praise them. What ever you do, don't let them go home feeling like a complete failure - they might not come back and that's not good for business! If the athlete goes home feeling more depressed than when he left home, parents or partners are not going to be very impressed with you. Make sure that you only criticize if it is going to benefit the athlete - don't criticize somebody else just to make yourself feel better - no matter what sort of day you are having! It doesn't matter if the gas man didn't turn up or if your car wouldn't start, don't take it out on the athlete. Remember that you are a performer and that the show must go on, it is nothing less than you would expect from the athlete.

PRAISE

Coaches who are quick to criticize should also be quick to praise and try to make it more than one word. If you were correcting your athletes you would go into quite a lot of detail - do the same when you are praising them. Don't just say 'well done' try saying 'you played really

well today and that goal you scored with your left foot was spectacular'. It costs you nothing to be polite and it can make such a difference to an athlete. I've often heard children come out of training sessions saying that their coach doesn't like them or that the coach thinks they are useless. When asked why they think like this they reply, 'he never says I'm good and he only talks to me to tell me I'm doing it wrong' or 'he's always talking to the girl with long hair, she must be the best'. Children don't realize that all the time you aren't correcting them it's because they are doing it right - they need to be told. You should always treat all the children the same, just because you have a child who is gifted or practices more don't ignore the less able - they try just as hard.

Don't let children leave a session without feedback from you, either about the session they've just had or about what you want them to do during the coming week. If the session finishes and you just let the children go home without giving them any feedback they will think that you are either just pleased to get rid of them or that they don't need to practice before their next lesson. Try to find out where they practice and what facilities they are able to use. Then you will be able to give them appropriate activities to practice between sessions. If they play tennis but don't have easy access to a tennis court perhaps you could suggest some drills they can practice in the garden. Children need to be told what to do - as do their parents.

By giving them something to practice you are showing the parents and the child that you think they are capable of improving and it shows you care about each individual athlete. It gives the athlete something positive to work towards between training sessions. Athletes know that they must practice but they don't always know what to practice or how to practice.

Always remember that if the athletes already knew what to do they wouldn't need you - you need to tell them.

TRUST

If your criticisms are to be taken seriously you must have some credibility. Don't be the kind of coach who criticizes athletes behind their backs or in front of other athletes. Athletes have to trust you and believe in you. They also need you to show them that you know what you are doing - don't say one thing and then do something different unless you have a very good reason that you can explain simply.

If you are lucky enough to coach someone who really wants to be successful in their field, they will probably take more notice of you than they do of their parents. Be prepared and be responsible.

KEY POINTS

1. Never embarrass athletes in front of other people
2. Give yourself plenty of time to explain
3. Stay positive
4. Praise athletes
5. Give them feedback

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A PICTURE

figure 1



figure 2

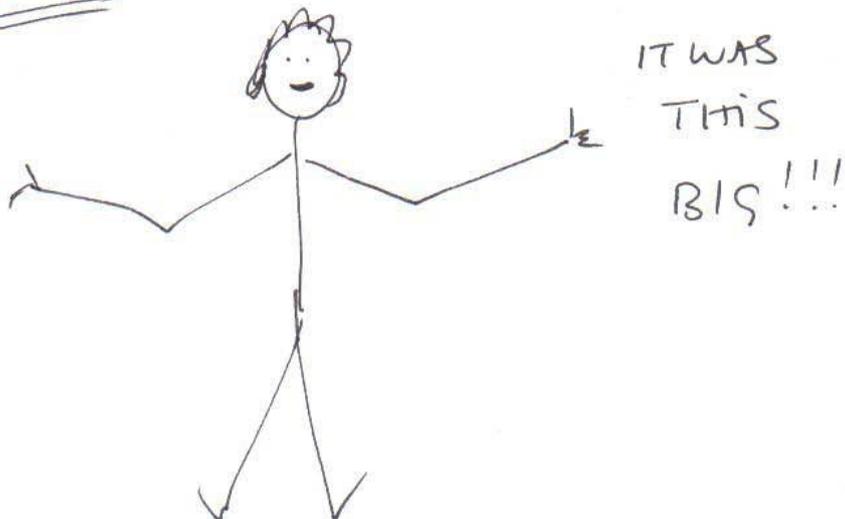


figure 3

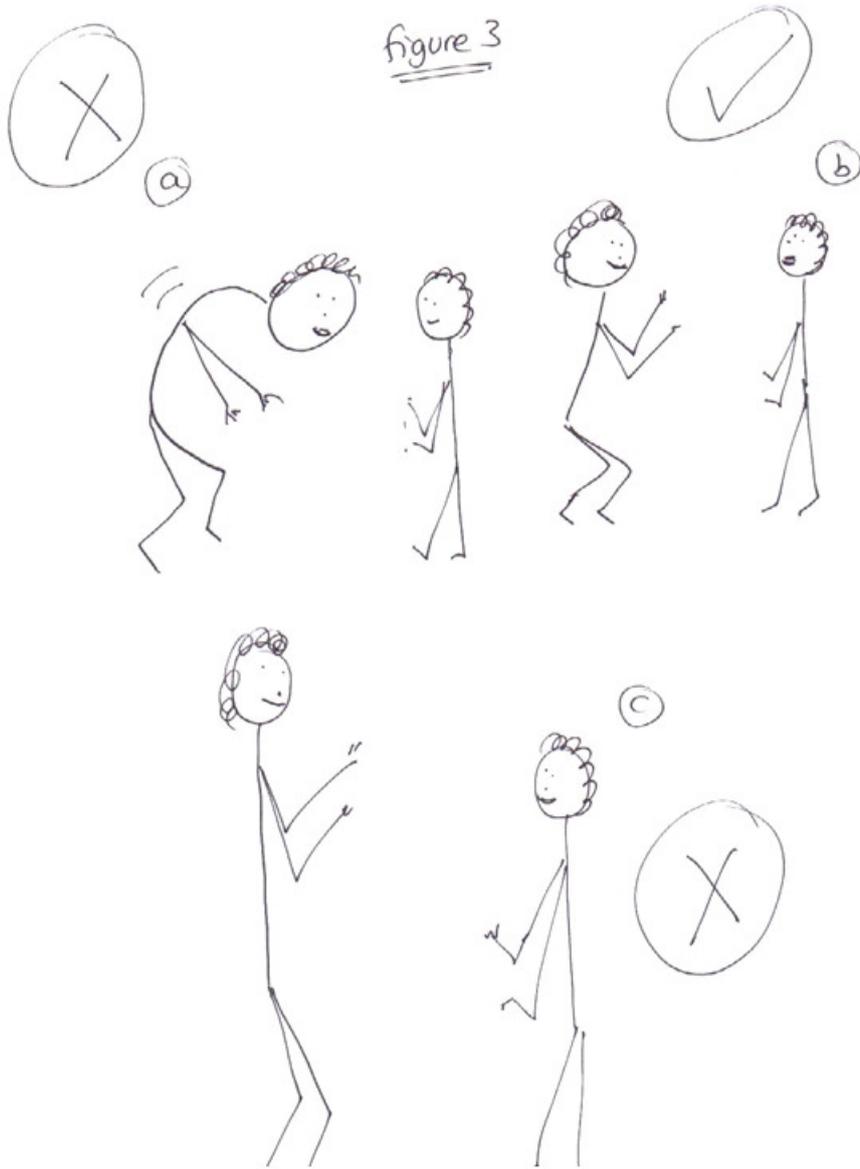


figure 4

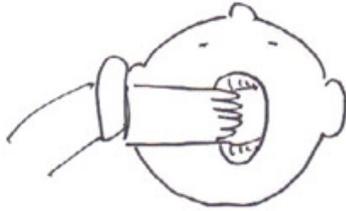


figure 6

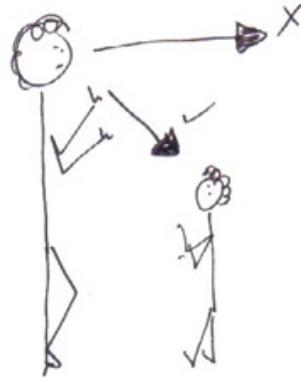


figure 5

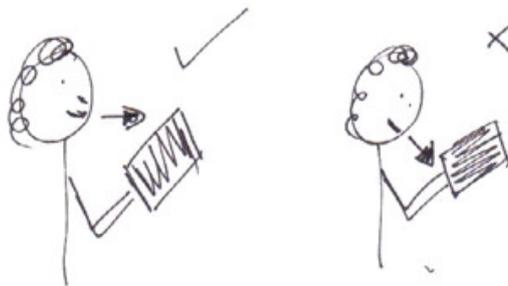


figure 7

CHAPTER 9

F.A.Q.

You've had years of experience playing and coaching your sport, you know the rules inside out and can identify faults easily, but how good are you at communicating this knowledge to your players? You know what you want to say but do you know how to say it effectively? Below are some questions regularly asked by coaches.

Q.1. Why do players have trouble hearing me even though I think I'm speaking loudly?

A.1. Your words need to be directed at the person you are talking to.

Not over their heads or down at the ground. If you want to win the 100 metres you don't run away from the finishing tape, you aim for the tape - your words must be aimed at your players. You must also open your mouth. A lot of people seem to think the sound will come out of a closed mouth - try kicking a ball without moving your leg - it's not possible.

Words won't come out of your mouth if it's not open. If you think that you do open your mouth widely, try saying a sentence while you look in the mirror, you'll be surprised at the smallness of the opening!

Athletes and coaches don't hesitate to exercise the appropriate muscles in their body in order to improve their playing but very few people think about exercising the muscles which help with speech. The tongue and lips need to be exercised daily. Ideally, voice exercises should be used. Exercises for vowel sounds exercise the lips whilst exercises for consonants are best for exercising the tongue. However, making funny faces by stretching the lips and tongue will suffice. Bad articulation is nearly always caused by lazy muscles.

Q.2. Why do players seem to misinterpret what I am saying?

A.2. Words aren't the only way we communicate. Facial expression is very important. Children often find it difficult to work out from our words alone whether we are serious, joking, angry, frustrated etc. Children tend to miss the nuances in the voice which alter the meaning for this reason it is important that people can see your face. They can then see if you are smiling or looking angry. Look at your players when you speak to them and look at them when they are speaking to you. Body language is also important, do you say one thing with your words but appear to say something else with your body? You may ask if everyone understands you and then when an athlete questions you about it, tap your feet with impatience implying that you would rather they hadn't bothered to ask you. You may not realize that you are doing it, but the next time you ask everyone understands, the athletes will be too frightened to say no.

Q.3. Why do players have coaches if they don't want to listen when I try to correct them?

A.3. When you correct players, try not to do it in front of the other people. If the athlete thinks that you are going to embarrass him in front of other athletes, he may pretend not to care about what you say.

Make sure that the player has the time to listen to you. Don't be tempted to leave it to the end of the session when the player is getting ready to leave and make sure that *you* have the time to explain fully, allowing time for the athlete to ask you any questions. If you have to rush any of your explanations, misunderstandings can occur. When introducing new ideas, only introduce one at a time, this will avoid confusion. Remember to find something positive to say - your job is to motivate players - if you make them feel like a failure they may not come

back. Make sure that the player needs to be corrected - don't criticize them just because they are having a bad day! Don't sound annoyed at their inability to do things right - you have been playing your sport for many years and it is all second nature to you.

Q.4. I sometimes get tongue tied when I'm speaking. How can it be avoided?

A.4. Don't speak too quickly, which is what happens when your brain is trying to make your mouth work physically faster than it is able. Slow your thoughts down. Opening your mouth more widely will help to slow your speech down. Pause between each new sentence, this will give the people listening the time to take in what you have said, they may want to laugh at a joke or just have time to think. It also gives you the time to take a breath and think about what you are going to say next. If you have just won a point in tennis, you stop and get your breath back, acknowledge the cheers of the crowd and then compose yourself for the next point. The same technique applies to speech.

Q.5. Why do I have a sore throat at the end of the day?

A.5. This usually happens when we are speaking in large areas. A lot of people are frightened of speaking loudly. People often start off quietly, which means no one can hear them, consequently they have to repeat themselves and then often shout to over compensate. The larger the hall or space is, the more breath is needed to support your voice.

The louder you speak the more emphasis you must put on the vowel sounds - you must open your mouth to let these vowel sounds out. If the space is larger you will need more energy in your words just as if you were to kick a football from one goal to the other you would need

more energy in the kick than if you were just passing it to a team mate a few yards away from you.. Make sure that you always finish the word, don't chop the end off. The more supple your lips and tongue are, the clearer your speech will be thus avoiding the need to shout. Correct breathing (as outlined below) will help.

Q.6. Why, when I have to talk to groups of people do I get out of breath and my mouth becomes dry?

A.6. In order to speak you need to be able to breath. A long sentence needs more breath than a short one - just as a long rally uses more energy than a short rally. Speaking requires intercostals diaphragmatic breathing with the use of the abdominal press. When people are asked to speak, the first thing they do is to lift their shoulders. This is usually caused by panic. Avoid lifting your shoulders - your top ribs don't move so you'll achieve nothing but tension in your neck and consequently in your throat. As you breathe in, your intercostals muscles, which are between the ribs, lift the ribs upwards and outwards allowing your lungs to fill with air. Your diaphragm will push downwards at the same time. As you use this air up, your diaphragm will return to its normal position, as will your ribcage. Breathing in through your nose will avoid the gasping sound some people make when nervous. To stop your mouth becoming dry, try smiling when you are speaking. This relaxes the muscles in the mouth and helps the creation of saliva.

Q.7. Some players seem to be asking the same questions again and again. Why?

A.7. Perhaps you are not listening to the question. It's very easy to think you know what people are going to say then let your mind wander.

In order to hit a ball you need to watch it coming towards you. If you want to respond intelligently to someone you must listen to what they say. Children are often too frightened to question their coach, so when they do ask a question, have the patience to listen! It may take them some time to get the point but try not to interrupt them.

Q.8. I find speaking at formal occasions terrifying but I don't mind speaking to a group of players in a training situation, why is this?

A.8. As a coach you spend a great deal of your time in comfortable clothing which is easy to move in. If you are talking to a group of business men and need to look smart, take care not to wear clothes that are too tight. Trousers, skirts, shirts and shoes which are slightly tighter than you are used to will restrict your breathing (and the thought of a button coming off will make you frightened to move!) Beware of too much jewellery - earrings, bracelets and necklaces can jangle every time you move.

Only use body movement if you really must. Obviously when you are coaching, movement is necessary and should come naturally. If addressing a more formal occasion try to keep still. A speaker who can't stay still is very distracting and the audience will start to watch you rather than listen to you.

If you are standing while you are talking don't lock your knees. Let your feet take your weight. If the knees are locked, the tension in your muscles will inhibit your breathing.

Avoid 'ums' and 'ers'. People will start to listen for them rather than listening to what you are saying. If you find it difficult to stop saying it, try thinking 'um' instead!

Think of your speech as a conversation, where the other person doesn't get a chance to join in.

Q.9. Why is it important for me to get on with the parents?

A.9. If you are to build a successful relationship with your player, you are going to have to get the parents to trust you. To do this, you must talk to and listen to them. Remember what the parents say and what they are expecting from you. If you disagree with their aims, speak to them.

If you ignore their views and give the impression that you are more important than the child, you will not be popular for long. If the parents ask you questions, keep your answers short and simple but avoid the use of one word answers such as 'yes' or 'no', which give the impression that you haven't got the time to bother with them. Make sure you listen to the parents (and the child) if they come to you with a problem. If it is upsetting the family it will affect their performance.

You may not be able to help, but you should be able to put them in touch with someone who can.

Q.10. How can using my voice help me to motivate players?

A.10. Always encourage players. Sound excited, even on bad days .Athletes won't care if you got up late, if your car wouldn't start or if you have a headache, you are a performer and the show must go on!

Never let players (especially young inexperienced players) go home feeling like losers. Your aim is to make them feel like a winner. The difference between winners and losers is often just a matter of confidence. If you are misunderstood as a coach, it is ultimately your fault. There are bad teachers but very few bad pupils! Be clear in your own mind what it is you are trying to say.

Practice out loud. Too many people think they can improve their speaking skills by reading about it. You wouldn't recommend to a child that they try to learn to swim simply by reading about it. The only way to gain confidence in speaking is to speak! Don't be afraid of the sound of your own voice and don't try to sound like anyone else. Enjoy peaking. Forget about luck, you know what you are talking about, now enjoy it and let your enthusiasm show through. Good sports coaches sound like excited children when they are talking about their sport. If you are to get your players motivated you must sound enthusiastic - all the time. Vary the pitch and pace of your voice to avoid it sounding monotonous.

CHAPTER 10

EXTRA TIME

The main aim of this book is to get you to be able to communicate more effectively by improving your speaking skills. It should now be obvious to you that if you speak clearly and confidently you are more likely to be able to influence the people around you and the more you can influence people, the higher your self confidence becomes. This should make you a much more dynamic coach.

As well as speaking clearly we need to be able to convey emotion in our voice. This is called 'tone colour' and in order to be able to do this you must fully understand what it is you want to say. Although emotion comes from inside us it must be controlled by our mind. Imagine how strange it would seem if you were trying to give someone a serious talk but you sounded flippant or if you were trying to be funny, using funny words - but they came out sounding very serious. Your athletes wouldn't know how to react to you.

If you are going to try and correct a fault such as telling your athlete that they are hitting the ball too close to their body, make sure you fully understand what the fault is, how to put it right and know how to explain it. Quite often we know what needs to be done but can't put it into words. We've all met people who take ages to explain anything to us - is it that they just can't find the right words or is it that they're not sure what they want to say?

'Oh, it was sort of, you know, a bit too close - you know what I mean, don't you?' The answer to this has to be 'NO'.

To practice being precise try to describe the following objects so that everyone will know what you are talking about.

Tennis Racket

Whistle

Pair of shorts

Cricket Bat

Swimming Pool

Javelin

When we fully understand what we are saying, our emotions will be released. When we are truly angry or excited our voice will show it – if we are pretending to be excited or angry we may say the correct words but the feeling will be missing.

If one of the main elements of good communication is clear speech, the other has to be good listening skills. To be a good communicator you need to be an expert in listening. We actually spend more time listening in life than we do talking!

It is very easy when we are busy to interrupt the speaker so often that the ‘listener’ can actually become the ‘speaker’. As a listener you should listen but be an ‘active’ listener. Nod occasionally and smile to let the speaker know that you understand what they are saying.

During this book you have learnt how to sound enthusiastic, angry, serious etc. When you are listening, use this knowledge to ascertain how the person speaking is feeling. If they are speaking quickly they are likely to be excited or angry - look at their facial expression to see which it is. If the speech is slow with little emotion they are likely to be fed up.

Try to always respond to the speaker in the same mood as they are talking to you. If they are serious give a serious response don’t be flippant. If an athlete has just won a match or a race and is talking to you excitedly about it, make sure you sound just as excited when you reply - even if it wasn’t an important match or race.

Finally, remember that communication is a two way process, you talk and you listen and if your athletes are to do well you have to sound as though you enjoy what you do. You don't want your athletes to wake up in the morning and think ' Oh no, I've got a training session today – if only the coach could make the sessions sound more interesting and a bit more exciting'

TOP 20 TIPS FOR STRESS FREE SPEAKING

In no particular order

1. Open your mouth. It doesn't matter how brilliant your ideas are if the sound can't come out of your mouth no one will hear them.
2. Look at the person you are talking to. Don't look down at the ground or over their heads.
3. Listen to what other people say and then you will be able to respond intelligently.
4. Speak slowly. Help those listening to understand you.
5. Breathe correctly. Keep your shoulders down and give your lungs a chance to fill up with air.
6. Exercise your organs of speech. The tongue and lips need daily exercise.
7. Stand and sit correctly. Let your muscles relax - any tenseness will inhibit clear speaking.
8. Find out about your audience. Are they old, deaf, etc?
9. Keep still. Fidgety speakers distract the audience.
10. Wear comfortable clothes. Don't try to squeeze into clothes that are too tight or wear things that make you feel to self conscious.
11. Avoid 'ums' and 'ers'. Think them instead.
12. Be aware of any favourite words you may use. Do you say 'okay' or 'yeah' at the end of every sentence?
13. Practise out loud. Remember you don't get good at anything unless you practice.
14. Be enthusiastic all the time. You don't need to shout and scream - just be positive about your sport whenever you are talking about it.
15. Don't get annoyed. If your athletes can't understand you, it may be your fault not theirs!
16. Think before you speak. Are you going to upset anyone by what you are saying?

17. If you use notes, don't be frightened to look at them.
18. Pause. Give people a chance to take in what you have said.
19. Smile - all the time. It does your reputation no harm and it helps prevent your mouth from drying out.
20. Say 'thank you' -to parents, coaches, athletes, referees - in fact to every one!

DRILLS

All of these exercises must be said out loud. Repeat each one twice a day.

Tongue agility

Work the tongue hard

1. Two little toddlers playing table tennis
2. Twenty two players taken out for a treat
3. Fifteen metre tracks are shorter than fifty meter tracks
4. Adults who play table tennis are extremely fit

Consonant sounds

Sound all the consonant sounds in each word

1. Badminton racquets are lighter than cricket bats
2. Isn't it time you tried the high jump
3. You need to attack if you want to win
4. Hitting tennis balls while sitting down is terribly difficult

Resonance

Hum the 'm' and 'n' sounds

1. Now is the time to introduce netball
2. Swimming is fun in the summer months

3. My martial arts instructor always smiles when he wins
4. Mini tennis is fun for small children

Lip agility

1. Betty plays competitive badminton
2. Weightlifters acquire many muscles
3. Boys love to play billiards
4. When I play polo I usually win

Vowel Sounds

Open the mouth as wide as possible for all the vowel sounds

i (eye)

1. My smile is wide as I cross the winning line
2. I cried when they scored a try
3. I'm too frightened to try and jump that high
4. I try to smile even while I am losing

o (oh)

1. Throw it slowly into the yellow box
2. Follow the arrows to avoid the snow
3. My coach is called Joe
4. Go and show Flo a Judo throw

a (ay)

1. I'm afraid you didn't make the relay team
2. Croquet is played at eight
3. There isn't enough space in this place for a race
4. Stay there Jay and pick up the weight

a (ah)

1. Martial Arts won't harm my arm
2. Stay calm, don't argue, I'll spar with you
3. My car can go fast
4. I can't lift the bar very far with my bad arm

QUICK QUIZ

1. Do you smile when you talk?

a) only when I'm happy b) never - it's a serious job c) always

2. Do people look at you when you talk?

a) Always b) sometimes c) never

3. Do people yawn when you talk?

a) sometimes b) they wouldn't dare c) yes

4. How many times in a day do people say 'pardon' and get you to repeat what you have just said?

a) 0-3 times a day b) 4 - 5 times a day c) lots of times

5. If you weren't a sports person which career would you choose?

a) film star b) shop assistant c) accountant

6. How would you describe a tree?

a) Green b) Brown and Green c) grows outside, tall, green leaves brown trunk.

7. Do you have a favourite word or phrase which you often repeat such as 'okay' or 'alright'?

a) yes - but it's only a short word b) yes - a complete sentence c) no

8. Do children ask you questions or do they get their parents to ask?

a) children b) parents c) neither - no one asks?

9. When you say 'thimble' does

a) your teeth touch the top of your mouth b) your tongue touch your teeth c) your teeth touch inside of your lips.

10. Do you wear sunglasses when talking to children and parents?

a) if it's sunny b) never c) always

Question	A	B	C
1	3	1	5
2	5	3	1
3	3	5	1
4	5	3	1
5	5	1	3
6	1	3	5
7	3	1	5
8	5	3	1
9	3	5	1
10	3	5	1

40 - 50 very good communication skills

30 - 39 good communication skills

18 - 29 Room for improvement

under 18 Read the book again!